महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK IX

THE COMPLETE SALYA PARVA

TRANSCREATED FROM SANSKRIT

By P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Śalya Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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ISBN 978-81-8157-776-4 (HB)
ISBN 978-81-8157-777-1 (FB)

महाभारत

WRITERS WORKSHOP books are published by P. Lal from 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045, India. Layout and lettering by P. Lal with a Sheaffer calligraphy pen. Printed by Abhijit Nath in a Lake Gardens Press.

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महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK NINE

The Complete Śalya Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. D. Litt. (Hon. Course) of Calcutta University for his "transcreation of the *Mahabharata*", 2006. Distinguished Professor Award for Lifetime Achievement, St. Xavier's College, 2007. Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lal began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece. 430 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW. P. Lal reads his *Mahabharata* transcreation daily on cable Tara TV Newz at 7:20 am & 7.20 pm. followed by a 6-segment repeat telecast on Sundays, and twice weekly on TV Southasia network.

Preface

Mahatma Gandhi must have had misgivings about Krishna as an avatara of Viṣṇu. His 60,000-plus "wives" and erotic-seeming rāsa-līlās with the gopis of Vṛndavana are not likely to impress an experimenter with truth who praised (and practised) the virtues of monogamy and brahmacarya-celibacy. So what does one do with Krishna as the central figure – if not central, certainly a major protagonist – in the *Mahābhārata*? Well, one turns "history" (thus-it-is *itihāsa*) into metaphor and symbol. Kurukṣetra, according to Gandhiji, is a symbolic battlefield, the mind of perplexed-in-crisis man struggling between the forces of good (Krishna and the Pāṇḍavas) and the forces of not-good (Duryodhana and the Kauravas). One does need to remember, however, that Vyāsa is not that simplistic and clear-cut black-and-white. He uses the honorific "mahātmā" for Duryodhana as well as Yudhiṣṭhira, and Duryodhana is also named throughout the epic as Suyodhana. (Noble Arjuna is given the honorific Bibhatsu or "dreadful-deed-doer").

It's good to keep in mind that Vyāsa makes it very clear that the dazzling mystical revelation of Krishna's viśva-rūpa-darśana on Kurukṣetra is witnessed only by Arjuna, and not any of the seven Pāṇḍava *akṣauhiṇī* ranks or the eleven Kaurava *akṣauhiṇīs.* It's an inner, private revelation, a Gerard Manley Hopinsian "I, wretch, lay wrestling with (my God!) my God." That being so, what is the role and significance of Krishna, the Pārthasārathi charioteer of Pārtha-Arjuna?

Krishna makes it very clear to Arjuna that he will not do Arjuna's dirty work. He will not fight for Arjuna with weapons. He will merely clarify the consequences of Arjuna's karma. It is Arjuna who is the owner of the chariot and possessor of the invincible Gāṇḍīva bow. It is Arjuna who must order Krishna to drive him to his future, good or bad. It is Arjuna who is the boss, not Krishna. Once Divinity gives freedom of choice to Humanity, destiny becomes subservient to conscience. Krishna is Arjuna's conscience, giving him all the moral and ethical options. At the

close of the Bhagavad-Gītā, Krishna tells Arjuna that he has given his beloved *sakhā* all the wisdom needed to act as a rational human being should act. "*Yathā icchasi tathā kuru*: You are free to choose." Don't praise or blame Krishna: praise or blame yourself.

It's the same story with Śalya the hero and commander-in-chief in Book Nine of the *Mahābhārata*. Śalya is Karṇa's conscience, his straight-speaking charioteer. His condition for becoming Karṇa's conscience is simple: You will have to listen uncomplainingly to whatever unflattering things I have to say. "I cannot force you; I can only warn you; I can lay the consequences clearly before; I will drive you wherever you order me. But you cannot pass the buck to me; you are the choice-maker, I only the helpful advisor."

Ah, the chariot and the charioteer! The core symbol of the mahā-kāvya! In the Strī Parva is a splendid śloka (7:13):

रथः शरीरं भूतानां
    सत्वमाहुस्त सारथिम्।
इन्द्रियाणि हवानाहुः
    कर्मबुद्धिस्तु रश्मयः॥

The body of a person,
    they say, is the chariot;
the life-essence, the charioteer; the senses, the horses;
    karma done with *buddhi*-reasoning, the reins.



Kolkata
May 2008

Dedication

To
William Hull
R.I.P.
good friend
parfait gentilhomme
शुभं तेऽस्तु

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīṁ Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION ~

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

SECTION ONE

1 “After ambidexterous Savyāsācī-Arjuna
  killed Karṇa in battle
(asked Janamejaya),
  what did the Kaurava survivors do?

2 Seeing the Pāṇḍavas celebrating
  their strength,
what was the reaction of the Kaurava rājā
  Suyodhana-Duryodhana?

3 O finest of the twice-born!
  I must know all this.
I am never tired of listening
  to the mahā-illustrious feats
of my forefathers.
  Tell me all.”

4 O rājā! (Vaiśampāyana continued)
  The death of Karṇa
plunged the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
  Suyodhana-Duryodhana
in an ocean
  of utterly hopeless grief.

5 Moaning “Hai Karṇa! Hai Karṇa!”
  again and again,
as if he too
  was about to die,
with great difficulty
  the king returned to his camp.

6 Even the rājās' citing
of the words of the śāstras
failed to console him.
All that revolved in his mind
was the death of Sūtaputra,
the charioteer's son Karṇa.

7 Trying to convince himself
that fate and inevitability
were all-powerful,
he started making
fresh preparations
for battle.

8 O bull-brave rājā Janamejaya!
Rājā Duryodhana
duly appointed Śalya
commander-in-chief,
and drove to the battlefield
with the surviving kings.

9 O finest of the Bharatas!
A tumultuous battle
took place between
the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava armies –
a battle resembling the clash
of gods and anti-gods.

10 It was at mid-day, mahārāja,
that Dharmarāja
Yudhiṣṭhira succeeded
in killing Śalya
who had wrought havoc
in his enemies' ranks.

11 As for rājā Duryodhana –
after the deaths
of his brothers and allies,
he fled terrified
to a lake and hid himself
in its gloomy waters.

12 But that very afternoon,
Bhīma and some others
surrounded the lake,
and Bhīma challenged
Suyodhana-Duryodhana out,
and killed him.

13 O Indra-among-rājās!
After mahā-bowman Duryodhana was killed,
three mahā-chariot-heroes,
Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman and Aśvatthāman,
killed at night
the sleeping Somakas and Pāñcālas.

14 Next morning,
deeply depressed and grief-stricken,
Sañjaya left
the military camp
and sadly made his way
to the capital Hastinapura.

15 Trembling uncontrollably,
hands upraised
to express his grief,
the Sūta Sañjaya
entered the palace
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

16 He was in tears as he said:
"Hai tiger-among-men!
Hai rājā! A calamity!
Aho! We are ruined!
The mahātmā Kaurava king
is dead.

17 Fate is all-powerful.
Effort is futile.
They were all as valiant
as Śakra-Indra –
yet the Pāṇḍavas
killed them all."

18 O rājā Janamejaya!
O finest of rājās!
The citizens of the capital
saw Sañjaya lost
in desolate grief –
and they burst

19 Into tears,
spontaneously crying, "Hai rājā!"
O tiger-among-men
Janamejaya!
All of them,
including the children,

20 Broke into a welter of wailing
at the news
of the king's death.
We could see
all the bull-brave citizens
running in confusion,

21 Bewildered,
as if bereft of their senses,
afflicted with terrible anguish.
Traumatised by grief,
the Sūta Sañjaya
entered the palace,

22 And stood before his lord,
the wisdom-inseeing
finest-of-kings Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
With that blameless monarch
were others
of the royal family,

23 Including, O excellent Bharata,
his daughters-in-law,
and Vidura and Gāndhārī,
all concerned
about his welfare.
Sitting around him,

24 They were all thinking
of the same subject,
the death of Karṇa.
O Janamejaya!
In a voice choked
with the intensity of grief,

25 Hardly audible,
his mind throbbing with pain,
the Sūta said: "Namaste!
O tiger-among-men!
O bull-brave Bharata!
I am Sañjaya.

26 O tiger-among-men!
The ruler-of-Madra Śalya,
Subala's son Śakuni,
and Ulūka, the valiant son
of dice-playing Śakuni,
are all dead.

27 All the Saṁśaptakas,
the Kāmbojas and Śakas,
the Mlecchas, the hill tribes,
and the Yavanas –
all of them
have been wiped out.

28 Maharaja!
The warriors of the east,
the warriors of the south,
the northerers and westerners –
incomparable warriors all –
all are dead.

29 O king! All the rājās
and sons of rājās are dead.
As predicted
by Pāṇḍava Bhīma,
rājā Duryodhana also
is dead.

[IX:1:30-35]

Transcreated by P. Lal

30 Mahārāja! His thighs smashed,
he lies bleeding
on the filth-covered ground.
Mahārāja!
Dhṛṣṭadyumna also is dead,
and never-defeated Śikhaṇḍin.

31 And so are Uttamaujas, O rājā,
and Yudhāmanyu,
and the Prabhadrakas.
O tiger-among-men!
The Pāñcālas and the Cedīs
have been wiped out.

32 O Bharata descendant!
All your sons, all the sons
of Draupadī are dead.
Karṇa's illustrious son
Vārṣṇeya
is dead.

33 O tiger-among-men!
They are all dead –
all the men gathered for war,
the elephant-riders,
the chariot-heroes,
the warriors on horses.

34 *Prabhu*! Lord!
All that is left
of the clash between
the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas
are a few survivors
recovering in their camps.

35 In this world caught
in the clutches of Kāla,
only the women are left –
and seven from the side
of the Pāṇḍavas, and three
of your chariot-heroes.

36 The five Pāṇḍava brothers,
  Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and Sātyaki;
  Kṛpa and Kṛlavarman
and the finest of victorious heroes
  Aśvatthāman.

37 O incomparable king!
  O lord of men!
Mahārāja!
  From all the *akṣauhiṇis*
that gathered
  for battle,

38 Only these ten warriors have survived.
  The rest, mahārāja,
are all dead.
  O bull-brave Bharata!
Kāla has destroyed
  the entire world,

39 Using for this purpose,
  O Bharata descendant,
Duryodhana and Duryodhana's hatred."
  These terrible words
made the lord-of-men
  Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

40 That Indra-among-rājās,
  lose his senses
and collapse on the floor.
  O mahārāja Janamejaya!
As soon as he fell,
  mahā-illustrious Vidura,

41 Also weakened by the grief
  he was experiencing,
collapsed on the floor as well.
  O finest of kings!
Gāndhārī and all
  the other Kaurava ladies,

42 Who had heard the bitter news,
swooned and fell on the floor.
That rājā-maṇḍala
of royal personages
lay almost senseless,
sprawled on the floor,

43 Lamenting deliriously.
They looked like figures
on a large painted canvas.
Slowly, painfully,
lord-of-the-earth
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

44 Traumatised by the news
of the deaths of his sons,
recovered his life-breath.
Even so, the king was trembling
with the enormity
of his grief.

45 Staring vacantly around him,
he numbled
to Kṣattā-Vidura:
"O learned one!
O mahā-wise Kṣattā! Help me,
O bull-brave Bharata!

46 I am a poor son-less man.
I have no one
to look after me."
Saying this, he lost
his senses again
and fell on the floor.

47 Seeing him prostrate,
his friends and relatives
who happened to be there
sprinkled cold water
on his face
and fanned him.

48 It took quite some time
for that lord of men
to return to his senses.
The ruler of the earth kept silent,
numbed by the pain
of filial sorrow.

49 O lord-of-the-world Janamejaya!
Like a snake in a pot,
he heaved long, heavy sighs.
Seeing the rājā
suffering like this,
Sañjaya burst into tears.

50 And all the ladies
and illustrious Gāndhārī!
burst into tears also.
There was a long pause.
Then he turned to Vidura
and spoke.

51 O finest-of-men Janamejaya!
Still dazed with grief,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Take them away from here,
all these ladies
and illustrious Gāndhārī,

52 And all my wellwishers too.
I am sick at heart.
My mind is whirling."
O bull-brave Bharata!
Kṣattā-Vidura heard this,
and slowly led the ladies

53 Out of the palace.
He was trembling visibly,
convulsively.
O Janamejaya! O best of the Bharatas!
Slowly the ladies
left the palace,

[IX:1:54-55; 2:1-3]

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54 As did the wellwishers,
glancing, as they departed
at the deeply grieving rājā.
O foe-crushing lord-of-men!
The king
regained his composure,

55 After his prolonged trauma
of mental anguish
and incontrollable lamentation.
Sañjaya kept looking
at him from the corners
of his eyes.
Indra-among-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
kept sighing
long and deep sighs
again and again.
Joining his palms in *añjali*,
Kṣattā-Vidura tried
to console him with sweet words.

SECTION TWO

1 The departure of the women
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
only worsened the misery of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
O mahārāja;
his lamentation became
even more pathetic.

2 Hot, heavy, long sighs
again and again;
then, after deep thought,
mahārāja, he said:

3 "Aho Sañjaya!
How mahā-painful to hear
from your lips
that the Pāṇḍavas
have come out unharmed
from the battlefield.

4 My heart must be made
 of adamantine thunder –
why does it not shatter
 into a thousand fragments
when I hear of the deaths
 of all my sons?

5 I think of their childhood days,
 Sañjaya,
and the games they played;
 and now they are dead,
and my mind explodes
 with the painful memory.

6 Yes, I am blind.
 Yes, I never saw them.
Yet, despite that,
 I really loved them,
I loved them with all the love
 of a father for his sons.

7 O blameless Sañjaya!
 How happy I was
when I used to hear
 that the boys
had passed from childhood
 and become adults.

8 And now I feel so lost,
 so forlorn,
when I hear
 they are all dead,
all stripped of their honour
 and their strength.

9 O my son! Come to me!
 Come to me,
O mahā-muscled Indra-among-rājās!
 I am helpless!
What will happen to me
 without you?

10 *Tāta*! Child! My dear son!
Why have you deserted
all these lords-of-the-earth
and like a low-minded, wicked king
chosen to sprawl
on the bare ground?

11 O valiant mahārāja!
You were the mainstay
of relatives and friends.
Where have you gone,
abandoning your old,
blind father?

12 O rājā! Have you no pity,
no love, no respect?
You were the one invincible
on the battlefield.
How did you die at the hands
of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons?

13 *Tāta*! Dear one!
O my brave son!
Who will now address me
as '*Tāta*! Dear father',
as 'Mahārāja', as 'Lokanātha,
Lord-of-the-world'?

14 O Kaurava! Speak to me!
Look at me lovingly
and embrace me. Order me!
Say: 'Advise me, father!'
Speak these sweet words
to me!

15 My son! I heard from your lips
that much of the earth
was in your control,
that Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
did not control
as much as as you did.

16 'Bhagadatta, Kṛpa,
Śalya, the two Avanti princes,
Jayadratha,
Bhūriśravas,
Somadatta,
mahārāja Bāhlika,

17 Aśvatthāman,
the Bhoja ruler Kṛtavarman,
the mahā-powerful Magadha ruler
Bṛhadbala,
Krātha,
Subala's son Śakuni,

18 Hundreds and thousands and Mlecchas,
Yavanas,
Śakas,
the Kāmboja ruler Sudakṣiṇa,
the Trigarta ruler Suśarmā,

19 Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
Bharadvāja's son Droṇa,
Kṛpa of the Gautama *gotra*,
Śrutāyu,
Ayutāyu,
Valiant Śatāyu,

20 Jalasandha,
Ṛṣyaśṛṅga's son –
the rākṣasa Alāyudha,
mahā-powerful Alambuṣa,
the mahā-chariot-hero Subāhu –

21 O finest of rājās!
These, and many other rājās,
have left their love
for wealth and life,
and are ready to fight
for me.

22 With their help,
and assisted by my brothers,
I will march
to battle
against the Pāṇḍavas
and the Pāñcālas.

23 O tiger-among-kings!
On the battlefield
I will challenge the Cedis,
Draupadī's sons,
Sātyaki, Kuntibhoja, and
the rākṣasa Ghaṭotkaca.

24 Mahārāja!
A single one of these allies,
when inspired by anger,
will successfully block
any concerted attack
by the Pāṇḍavas.

25 And if all these
Pāṇḍava-hating heroes
join forces, anything can happen!
Or they will single out
the allies of the Pāṇḍavas
and exterminate them,

26 Removing our foes one by one,
O Indra-among-rājās!
Karṇa, singly,
with my help,
will finish off
all the Pāṇḍavas.

27 And that will bring
all the heroic kings
under my authority.
Their leader,
mahā-powerful
Vāsudeva-Krishna,

28 Has given me word
he will not fight
on the battlefield.'
O Sañjaya!
When Duryodhana
said all this to me,

29 I was convinced our shakti
was powerful enough
to wipe out the Pāṇḍavas.
And yet, and yet,
despite all those allies,
my sons are dead.

30 What else can it be
but their ill luck,
destined to be so?
Famed-for-valour
lord-of-the-earth Bhīṣma,
killed

31 By Śikhaṇḍin
like a lion by a jackal,
and Droṇa the Brahmin,
supremely learned
in the wisdom
of all the śāstras,

32 Slaughtered by the Pāṇḍavas –
what else but ill luck,
destined to be so?
And mahā-powerful Karṇa,
expert in celestial missiles,
also killed –

33 Bhūriśravas killed,
Somadatta and mahārāja Bāhlika
also killed –
what else is all this
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

34 And Bhagadatta,
expert in elephant-warfare,
and Jayadratha killed –
what else is all this
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

35 Sudakṣiṇa,
the Paurava Jalasandha,
Śrutayu and Ayutāyu killed –
what else is all this
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

36 Learned-in-all-the-śāstras,
the supremely mahā-powerful
ruler Pāṇḍya
killed by the Pāṇḍavas –
what else but ill luck,
destined to be so?

37 Bṛhadbala killed,
and the mahā-powerful ruler
of Magadha,
and the ideal
and illustrious
bow-expert Ugrāyudha,

38 The two Avanti princes,
the ruler of Trigarta,
and all the Saṁśaptakas –
what else is all this
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

39 Mahā-valiant Alambuṣa,
and Ṛṣyaśṛṅga's son,
the rākṣasa Alāyudha killed –
what else is all this
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

40 The battle-brilliant Nārāyaṇas,
the Gopālas,
and thousands of Mlecchas killed –
what else is all this
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

41 Subala's son Śakuni, and gambler
Śakuni's mahā-powerful son Ulūka,
and their armies killed –
what else is all this
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

42 These and so many others,
rājās and sons of rājās,
skilled in war-weapons,
hard-to-defeat-in-battle,
warriors with arms resembling
parigha-spiked iron clubs –

43 All slaughtered –
what else but ill luck,
destined to be so?
Heroic bow-experts,
skilled in weapons,
hard-to-defeat-in-battle,

44 As valiant as Mahendra-Indra,
coming from various lands,
all of them killed, O Sañjaya –
what else can it be
but ill luck,
destined to be so?

45 All my sons killed,
all my grandsons,
all of them mahā-powerful,
all of them
slaughtered
on the battlefield –

46 My brothers, my friends –
what else but ill luck,
destined to be so?
It must be we are born
with our future
already decided –

47 It's the lucky ones
who always prosper.
Isn't that so, Sañjaya?
With all my sons dead,
it must be
I am the unlucky one.

48 What will be the fate
of an old man
in his enemy's clutches?
O lordly Sañjaya!
What is left for me now
but forest-exile?

49 Without friends, without relatives,
What choice do I have?
It's best
I go to a forest
and pass the rest
of my life there.

50 I am a wingless bird,
Sañjaya,
I am a lost and lonely man.
When Duryodhana dead,
and Śalya dead
on the battlefield,

51 And Duḥśāsana and Viviṁśati
and mahā-powerful Vikarṇa dead,
do you expect
me to listen quietly
to the arrogant shouts
of Bhīma

52 Who has singly killed
my hundred sons
on the field of battle?
Mourning Duryodhana;
do you expect me,
O Sañjaya,

53 To listen quietly
to the bitter words
spouted by Bhīma?"
His relative killed,
the old grief-stricken king
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

54 Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
lamenting the loss
of his sons,
for a long time
alternated fitfully
between silence and anguish.

55 Sighing hot and heavy sighs,
O rājā Janamejaya,
brooding on his misery,
his mahā-affliction,
his burning pain,
that bull-brave Bharata

56 Monarch once again asked
Gavalgaṇa's son Sañjaya
for details about the battle.
"When they heard
of the deaths of Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
and the charioteer's son Karṇa,

57 Who was their commander-in-chief,
tell me,
what did my sons do?
Whoever was made
commander-in-chief of the army
of my sons

58 Was swiftly killed
by the Pāṇḍavas.
On the battlefield,
before your very eyes,
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna killed Bhīṣma,

59 And the death of Droṇa
also took place
in front of your eyes.
It was the same
with illustrious Karṇa,
the charioteer's son,

60 Who was cut down
by diadem-decorated Kiriṭin-Arjuna
while the rājās looked on.
A long time ago,
mahātmā Vidura
had warned me:

61 'Duryodhana's crime
will wipe out
the people of your kingdom.'
There are fools
in this world who have eyes
but do not see.

62 You see one such fool
in front of you.
What far-seeing dharmātma Vidura
predicted,
has indeed come true.
Truth-speakers are always vindicated.

63 O son of Gavalgaṇa!
Fooled by fate,
I rejected his words.
Tell me in detail
the fearful price I have paid
for that rejection.

64 Who stood at the head
of our army
after the death of Karṇa?
Which chariot-hero
rose to challenge Arjuna
and Vāsudeva-Krishna?

65 Who protected
the right and left wheels
of the chariot
of the Madra-rājā Śalya?
Which hero protected
his rear?

66 Explain to me, Sañjaya,
with all of you there,
how was it possible for the Pāṇḍavas
to kill the mahā-chariot-hero
Madra-rājā Śalya
and my son Duryodhana?

67 Give me all the details
of the mahā-slaughter
of these descendants
of the Bharata dynasty,
specially the death
of my son Duryodhana.

68 Tell me how the Pāñcālas
and their followers
were killed,
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and Śikhaṇḍin,
and Draupadī's five sons.

69 And how did these survive
the carnage –
the five Pāṇḍavas,
Krishna and Sātyaki,
Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman,
and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman?

70 I want to know everything
that happened
on the battlefield.
You are such a fine speaker,
Sañjaya.
Tell me everything."

SECTION THREE

1 O rājā! (said Sañjaya)
Listen carefully
to the mahā-carnage
of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas.

2 After mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
killed the charioteer's son,
and the Kaurava warriors
panicked and fled,

3 And the field was littered,
O finest of men,
with heaps of human corpses,
Pārtha-Arjuna celebrated
the slaughter of Karṇa
with lion-roars of victory.

4 Hearing these roars, O rājā,
your sons
were gripped by mahā-fear.
Re-grouping
and counter-attacking
with fresh valour

5 Was far from the minds
of the soldiers
of your army.
Like merchants on a ship
foundering and sinking
in a vast ocean,

6 Struggling to survive, O rājā,
we arrow-pierced victims
realised that our island of refuge,
the charioteer's son Karṇa,
had been destroyed
by diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

7 We were like deer terrorised
by a lion,
like horn-shattered bulls,
like fang-less snakes.
We were the lost and forlorn,
looking for a saviour.

8 Decimated by ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna,
we retreated to our camps
in the evening,
our leaders dead,
and we an arrow-devastated rabble.

9 O rājā! The death of Karṇa
led to the rout of your sons.
Their armours
ripped and smashed,
confused, they lost all sense
of direction.

10 Staring wildly,
they even attacked each other.
Wherever they looked, they saw
dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna
and wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

11 O descendant of Bharata!
Bereft of hope and joy,
they blamed each other.
Some mahā-chariot-heroes,
on horses, on elephants,
or in chariots,

12 Fled the field,
deserting the foot-soldiers.
Panic-stricken elephants
trampled chariots,
massive chariots crushed
and killed horse-riders

13 And wounded and mangled
the hordes of soldiers
running helter-skelter.
Like stragglers
lost in a snake-and-robber-
infested forest –

14 Were your soldiers on the field
after the death of Karṇa.
So many elephant-riders
exterminated,
so many elephants with trunks
sliced or smashed . . .

15 So many terror-stricken soldiers
seeing nothing
but Arjuna everywhere around them.
Seeing hordes
of soldiers fleeing
from fear of Bhīma,

16 Duryodhana exclaimed “Hai! Hai!”
and said
to his charioteer:
“When I, with bow readied,
stand at the rear of the army,
Pārtha-Arjuna

17 Will find it impossible
to drive through.
So, take me quickly there!
On the battlefield,
however hard he tries,
Kaunteya-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

18 Will never cross me.
Even the mahā-ocean
stops at the shore.
Today, Arjuna, Govinda-Krishna,
arrogant wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma,

19 And other enemies will I kill,
and thus pay back
the debt I owe Karṇa."
Inspired by these
hero-worthy words
of the Kaurava-rājā Duryodhana,

20 The charioteer
slowly urged forward
the gold-caparisoned horses.
O respect-worthy monarch!
Without elephant, horse and chariot support,
foot-soldiers –

21 Twentyfive thousand strong –
slowly marched
to launch a counter-attack.
Enraged Bhīma
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the son of Parṣata,

22 With the might of their fourfold army,
mauled and maimed
the Kauravas
with volleys of arrows,
but they withstood Bhīma
and Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

23 Challenging them by naming them:
"Pārtha! Pārṣata!"
Getting singled out and dared
in this manner
on the battlefield
infuriated Bhīma.

24

Leaping down from his chariot,
he swept through their ranks
in close battle.
Dharma-observing wolf-waisted Bhīma
left the chariot,
and chose the ground.

25

Kuntī's son Bhīma depended
on pure muscular strength
to battle with foot-soldiers.
With the power
of his massive gold-plated,
gold-filigreed mace,

26

He attacked them
with the ferocity
of rod-wielding Antaka-Yama.
Abandoning their bonds with kinsfolk
and their desire to live,
the foot-soldiers

27

Rushed at Bhīma
like insects flying
into a fierce fire.
The enraged
battle brilliant foot-soldiers
attacked Bhīma

28

And screamed – like creatures
wailing when confronted
by the god of death
Antaka-Yama.
Bhīma was like a hawk
swooping on the soldiers.

29

With his sword and his mace
he exterminated
all twentyfive thousand
of your soldiers.
After the massacre,
truly valiant Bhīma,

30 The mahā-powerful warrior,
placed Dhṛṣṭadyumna in front,
and recommenced
his assault. Elsewhere,
valiant Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
attacked the chariot-ranks.

31 Decimating Duryodhana's army,
Mādrī's sons Nakula and Sahadeva,
and Sātyaki
the mahā-powerful warrior,
targeted the soldiers under
the command of Śakuni.

32 Wiping out the horse-riders
of Śakuni's army
with sharp arrows,
they concentrated on Śakuni himself –
and the result was
a horrendous clash.

33 O rājā! Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
twanged
his three-worlds-celebrated
Gāṇḍīva bow,
and drove into the ranks
of your chariots.

34 Seeing white-horsed Arjuna advancing,
guided
by his charioteer
who was Krishna himself,
your chariot-heroes retreated
in fear.

35 Unsupported by chariots
and cavalry,
shrouded by arrow-showers,
twentyfive thousand
foot-soldiers attacked
Pārtha-Arjuna.

36

Slaughtering the foot-soldiers,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
placed Bhīma in front,
and immediately
claimed victory.

3

The Pāñcāla prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Śrīmān Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
was a mahā-illustrious
grinder of his enemies,
universally celebrated
as a mahā-bow-expert.

38

Seeing his pure-white,
pigeon-complexioned horses,
and his magnificent
kovidara-tree-symbolled war-flag,
your soldiers panicked
and fled in fear.

39

And then Sātyaki appeared,
with Mādrī's twin sons,
illustrious Nakula and Sahadeva,
in swift pursuit
of the weapons-hurling
rājā-of-Gāndhāra Śakuni.

40

O respectworthy monarch!
Decimating your army,
Cekitāna, Śikhaṇḍin
and the five sons
of Draupadī
sounded their conches.

41

And as your soldiers scattered
helter-skelter,
they pursued their victims
remorselessly,
like strong bulls hounding
humiliated members of the herd.

42 O king! Seeing that segment
of your son's army
still offering resistance,
the powerful Pāṇḍava,
ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
was infuriated.

43 He shrouded those soldiers,
O rājā,
with a deluge of arrows.
So thick was the dust
that nothing was visible
on the field of battle.

44 With the earth pitch-dark
and shrouded with arrows,
fear gripped
your soldiers
and they fled
in all directions.

45 O lord of the earth!
Seeing them fleeing,
the Kaurava rājā Duryodhana
attacked not only his enemies,
but his allies
as well.

46 O finest of the Bharatas!
Like the anti-god Bali
in the distant past
challenging the gods,
Duryodhana defied
all the Pāṇḍavas.

47 Undeterred the infuriated Pāṇḍavas
unleashed
a barrage of miscellaneous
weapons and missiles,
targeting the roaring warrior
Duryodhana.

48 Not that this troubled Duryodhana,
for he continued
his downpour of arrow-showers.
We were witnesses
to the incredible display
of your son's valour –

49 Because the combined might
of the Pāṇḍavas
failed to dislodge him.
Though fleeing,
his soldiers had not gone
too far –

50 Duryodhana noticed this
very carefully,
O Indra-among-rājās;
and so your son,
always one to make
quick and firm decisions,

51 Tried to rally them
by reviving their morale
with these words:
"I can see no place,
in plain or valley
or mountain,

52 Where the Pāṇḍavas cannot
find you and kill you.
Where will you run and hide?
Not too many Pāṇḍavas left;
and Krishna and Arjuna
wounded –

53 If we remain united now,
victory is sure to be ours!
If you scatter,
the Pāṇḍavas
will one by one catch you
and kill you.

54 Is it not far better
to stand firm
and die fighting?
Kṣatriya-dharma says
happiness is to meet death
on the battlefield.

55 No joy on earth
for a dead warrior;
his joy lies in heaven.
Listen to me –
all you Kṣatriyas
who are gathered here:

56 If you try to flee,
you will fall prey to Bhīma –
so why not follow
the dharma
practised by your fathers
and grandfathers?

57 What greater crime is there
for a Kṣatriya
than fleeing from battle?
Listen to me, Kauravas!
Yuddha-dharma is the surest
road to heaven.

58 Others take ages to reach heaven.
The warrior gets it
in a single day."
Paying pūjā-respect
to rājā Duryodhana's advice,
the mahā-chariot-heroes,

59 Kṣatriyas all of them,
resolved to stand firm
against the Pāṇḍavas.
Defeat was unacceptable;
they set their minds
on victory.

[IX:3:60-61; 4:1-4]

60 And so, once again started
a gruesome clash
between your warriors and theirs,
resembling the battle
between the gods
and the anti-gods.

61 Mahārāja! Your son Duryodhana
attacked the Pāṇḍavas
under Yudhiṣṭhira
with all the warriors under his command.

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SECTION FOUR

1 O respectworthy monarch!
(continued Sañjaya)
Seeing the shattered chariot-seats
and smashed chariots
and mangled elephants
and foot-soldiers,

2 The field of battle
like the playing field
of Rudra-Śiva,
littered with the corpses
of hundreds of thousands
of rājās,

3 Seeing the glory
of Partha-Arjuna
after the ignominious retreat
of the soldiers
of your grief-stricken son
Duryodhana,

4 And hearing
what those confused soldiers
planned to do next,
and listening,
O descendant of Bharata,
to the wails of the Kauravas,

5 And seeing the tattered war-flags
and other equipment
of the Indras-among-rājās,
caring and kind and concerned Kṛpa,
O rājā,
was deeply disturbed.

6 Eloquent and energetic Kṛpa
approached
lord-of-men Duryodhana
and, touched
by his sorrowing state,
he said:

7 "O Kaurava Duryodhana!
Listen carefully
to what I have to say.
O defectless one! Mahārāja!
If you like what I say,
act accordingly.

8 O Indra-among-rājās!
O bull-brave Kṣatriya!
There is no path superior
to war-dharma.
It blesses and inspires Kṣatriyas
to fight.

9 A true Kṣatriya,
if required,
will fight son,.brother, father,
sister's son, maternal uncle,
friends and relatives –
on principle.

10 To kill, or be killed,
in war, is dharma.
To flee is adharma.
Awesome indeed is life
for anyone who lives
by this principle.

11 Which is why I say this
for your good.
They are all dead –
Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Karṇa,

12 Jayadratha and,
O defectless Duryodhana,
all your brothers,
and your son Lakṣmaṇa.
No one is left
who can help us now.

13 The heroes on whom we depended
to help us enjoy the kingdom
are gone
to the sacred regions
that are attained
by the knowers-of-Brahmā.

14 We do not now have
any mahā-chariot-heroes
to save us in this crisis.
We have been the cause
of the deaths
of so many kings.

15 Even when alive, they could not
even once defeat
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.
With Krishna
on his side, mahā-armed Arjuna
can rout even the gods.

16 His ape-symbolled war-flag
is like a multi-coloured rainbow,
as high as Indra's war-flag.
Facing him
makes even our massive army
lose courage

17 The lion-roars of Bhīma,
the reverberation
of the Pāñcajanya conch,
and the twang
of the Gāṇḍīva
make our hearts shudder.

18 Like a mahā-lightning flash
blinding our eyes,
like a dazzling
circle of fire,
is the Gāṇḍīva bow
brandished by Arjuna.

19 That massive bow,
in the hands of Arjuna
strung and aimed, shaken,
with its gold filigree work,
gleams like lightning
in dark clouds.

20 His chariot's white horses
shine with the beauty
of the moon
or white *kāśa*-reeds.
So swift, they seem to swallow the sky
the sky when they gallop.

21 With Krishna as charioteer,
these gold-caparisoned horses
with glittering shapes,
transport Arjuna –
they are swift like the wind
propelling clusters of cloud.

22 O rājā!
The absolute expert-in-weapons Arjuna
has swept through your ranks
like a forest fire
reducing an entire jungle
to ashes.

[IX:4:23-28]

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23 Dazzling with the glory
of Mahendra-Indra himself,
is Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
penetrating our ranks
like a four-tusked
leader elephant.

24 Like an elephant plunging in a lake
and agitating its waters,
we saw
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
plunging into your ranks
and terrorising the kings.

25 We saw Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
twanging his bow
and spreading terror
among your soldiers,
like a lion scattering
a herd of deer.

26 Clad in armour, the two Krishnas,
Krishna and Arjuna,
the finest of all bull-brave
wielders of the bow,
roam fearlessly
through the enemy ranks.

27 O descendant of Bharata!
Seventeen days
have passed
of this savage
mutual butchery
of the opposing armies.

28 Like the wind scattering clouds
in autumn,
the different segments
are targeted
and dispersed and routed
wherever they are.

29 Mahārāja! Ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
buffets your army
like a storm
slapping a boat
on a huge ocean.

30 Where was the charioteer's son,
Sūtaputra Karṇa,
where were Droṇa
and his followers,
where were I, and you,
and Hārdika-Kṛtavarman,

31 Where was your brother
Duḥśāsana,
and where all your other brothers
when Arjuna took aim
and targeted Jayadratha
with his arrows?

32 Your relatives watched,
and your brothers
and maternal uncles watched;
and trampling them with his valour,
and placing his feet
on their heads,

33 Arjuna slaughtered Jayadratha.
Who is now left, O rājā,
who can help us?
Where is the manly man
who has the courage
to defeat Pāṇḍava Arjuna?

34 Mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
possesses a variety
of celestial weapons.
The twang of his Gāṇḍīva
has the power
to stupefy us.

35 Dark is the night
without the moon,
dark our army
without a leader.
A wasteland whose trees
are uprooted by elephants.

36 It is so easy for white-horsed
Śvetavāhana-Arjuna
to lay waste
your leaderless army,
like a blazing fire
consuming dry grass.

37 The irresistible energy
of Sātyaki
and Bhīma
can pulverise mountains
and dry up
the ocean.

38 O lord of the earth!
What Bhīma in the sabhā
said he would do,
he has done.
What remains to be done,
that too he will do.

39 Karṇa could not defeat
the hard-to-overcome army
of the Pāṇḍavas
for the simple reason
that Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna
was defending it.

40 You have without reason
hugely insulted
the good-natured Pāṇḍavas
time and again –
and you are now tasting
the bitter fruits.

41 O bull-brave Bharata!
For your safety
you made alliances
with the world's leaders –
but to what use? –
Your life is in danger.

42 Duryodhana! *Tāta*! My child!
Look after yourself.
The ātman is everything.
When the root is cut,
the whole tree
topples.

43 According to Bṛhaspati,
when your strength is less than,
or equal to, your enemy's,
then make peace.
Fight only when your strength
exceeds his.

44 Our army, our shakti
are far less
than those of the Pāṇḍavas.
Lord! *Prabhu*!
It's time to make peace
with Pāṇḍu's sons.

45 Who ignores his own good,
and insults his superiors,
is soon ruined.
He will lose his kingdom.
He will never
come to any good.

46 Best if we humbly go to Yudhiṣṭhira,
and thereby
retain our kingdom.
It is stupid, O rājā,
to be stubborn now
and taste defeat.

47 Yudhiṣṭhira
is a forgiving man.
If Vicitravīrya's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra so advise,
and Govinda-Krishna
he will let you
retain the kingdom.

48 And what Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
tells never-defeated
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Arjuna and Bhīma to do,
they will do.
No doubt of that.

49 And I am sure
Krishna will never turn down
any request that comes
from Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
will never say no to Krishna.

50 Make peace.
It's best for you.
Don't fight the Pāṇḍavas.
I do not say this
out of cowardice,
or because I want to save my life.

51 I speak for your good,
O rājā!
When you face death,
you will remember my words."
Speaking sadly like this,
Śaradvat's son Kṛpa
heaved long and hot sighs.
His mind was deep
in the grip
of grief.

SECTION FIVE

1 O lord of the earth! (said Sañjaya)
Rāja Duryodhana heard
firm-in-tapasyā Kṛpa's advice,
sighed heavily, and kept silent.

2 After some deep thinking,
your mahā-minded,
foe-crushing son said
to Śaradvat's son Kṛpa:

3 "You have said to me
what a friend should say.
More than that –
you have risked your life
in battle
for my welfare.

4 The whole world has seen you
penetrating
the ranks of our enemies
and repeatedly battling
the supremely energetic
Pāṇḍava mahā-chariot-heroes.

5 Your words are the words of a friend.
They are well-meant
but they do not please me.
They are like medicine
that does not please
a dying man.

6 O mahā-muscled one!
O finest of the twice-born!
Beautiful words.
Well-meant words.
Reasonable words.
But they do not please me.

7 We tricked mahā-wealthy Yudhiṣṭhira
out of his kingdom
by defeating him
in the dice-game.
Why should he ever
trust us again?

8 Why should he have
any *śraddhā* at all
for what I say?
Krishna, who delights
in favouring the Pāṇḍavas,
came to me once,

9 As emissary, and I tricked
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna too.
I know I did wrong.
Tell me, Brahmin,
why will he listen
to me now?

10 Krishna is not going to forget
what we did
to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
weeping in the sabhā,
and our appropriation
of Yudhiṣṭhira's kingdom.

11 *Prabhu*! Lord! They are two,
Krishna and Arjuna,
but they are two-in-one.
Each strengthens the other.
This I had heard;
now I see it's true.

12 Keśava-Krishna knows
how we killed
his nephew Abhimanyu.
The news grieved him deeply.
I do not think
he will forgive us.

13 The death of Abhimanyu
has taken away
Arjuna's peace of mind.
Why should he listen to anyone
who asks him
to favour me?

14 As for Bhīma, the second brother,
he is mahā-powerful
and relentless.
He has vowed a terrible vow.
He will break,
but he will not bend.

15 Nakula and Sahadeva
hate me;
clad in armour,
swords uplifted,
the twins are
like two Yamas.

16 O finest of the twice-born!
Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍin
also hate me.
You cannot expect them
to do anything
for my good.

17 Dressed in a single cloth,
and in her period,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī was dragged
and abused
in the sabhā
in the presence of all,

18 And stripped.
You cannot expect the Pāṇḍavas
to forget this.
Which is why
you cannot stop those foe-crushers
from waging war.

19 From the day of her humiliation,
Draupadī sleeps
on the bare ground,
and will do so
till the day
she is avenged.

20 For the welfare of her husbands
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
practises the severest tapasyā,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna's sister
Subhadrā,
forsaking dignity and pride

21 Serves her mother-in-law
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
like a dedicated maidservant.
Everyone is aflame
with a fire
that cannot be extinguished.

22 How can there be peace with Arjuna,
burning
over the death of his son Abhimanyu?
A rājā like me
who has ruled
the entire sea-girdled earth –

23 How can I enjoy a kingdom
handed to me in charity
by the Pāṇḍavas?
After shining
like the day-making sun
on all other rājās,

24 How can I shuffle
behind Yudhiṣṭhira
like a cowering slave?
After basking in luxury
and giving away wealth
in copious charity,

25 How can you expect me
to subsist on the charity
of the charity-receivers?
You spoke as a friend.
I am not finding fault
with your fine advice.

26 All I am saying is:
The time for peace-making
is over.
O foe-crusher!
The time now is to fight –
and fight well.

27 I have performed many yajñas.
I have given Brahmins
copious *dakṣiṇā.*
This is no time
for cowardice;
it's time to show courage.

28 Desires fulfilled, Vedas listened to,
feet placed
on the heads of my enemies,
all the needs
of my servants and followers attended to,
tāta, friend,

29 O finest of the twice-born,
I see no sense
in making peace
with the Pāṇḍavas.
I have conquered others' kingdoms,
cherished my own,

30 Savoured many pleasures,
served the three ideals
of artha, dharma and kāma.
Kṣatriya-dharma
and reverence to ancestors –
I have cleared my debts to both.

31 No joy in this world is eternal;
not kingdom,
and not fame.
Still, fame is worth acquiring –
and the finest fame
is acquired on the battlefied.

32 It'ts shameful for a Kṣatriya
to die at home.
The worst adharma of all
is for a Kṣatriya
to die in the comfort
of his bed.

33 The man who, after performing
mahā-yajñas,
dies in a forest
or on a battlefield
is the man who attains
mahā-glory.

34 That man is no man
who dies old
and enfeebled and diseased,
himself groaning,
and surrounded by a horde
of moaning relatives.

35 The longing I have in me
is to fight
and go to those realms
where go all those
who forsake pleasures
in order to attain the supreme goal.

36 The intelligent
who have noble ideals,
the never-retreating-in-battle,
the firm-in-truth,
those who perform
the sacred rituals,

37 Those who bathe in the holy water
of war-weapons –
they are the ones who attain heaven.
The apsarās
gaze lovingly on those
who fight bravely,

38 And the *pitṛs* see them
receiving pūjā-respect
in the assembly of the gods.
Surrounded by apsarās,
they are the ones who enjoy
the pleasures of heaven.

39 The path that is travelled
by the gods
and by heroes
who never turn their backs in battle –
should not all of us
travel the same path? –

40 Elderly Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
our percipient
ācārya Droṇa,
and Jayadratha,
and Karṇa,
and Duḥśāsana –

41 So many brave rulers-of-men
have sacrificed
their lives for my sake.
Shredded by arrows,
their blood-spattered bodies
litter the battlefield.

42 Absolute experts in war-weapons,
meticulous performers
of sacred rituals,
many heroes have sacrificed their lives,
and are now
in the realm of Indra.

43 So many of them, so many
that the path
to the happy realm
is over-crowded,
making it difficult of access
to new arrivals.

44 When I think of all those
who have died for me,
I wonder how to clear
my debt to them –
and then my kingdom
means nothing to me.

45 I am responsible
for the deaths of friends,
relatives, and revered elders.
If I save my own skin now,
will I not be shamed
in the eyes of the world?

46 What kind of a kingdom
will it be,
without relatives, without friends –
this kingdom
that Yudhiṣṭhira will deign
to give me?

47 And so I have decided.
I will fight
and lay waste this world,
and go to heaven.
I am determined.
There is no other way."

48 The Kṣatriyas listened
to rājā Duryodhana.
They offered him pūjā-respect.
Saying "*Sādhu*! *Sādhu*!
Excellent! Excellent!"
they expressed their gratitude.

49 Forgetting their defeat,
they made up their minds
to display their valour.
With new hope in their hearts,
they were now convinced
that war was the best course.

50 They rested their horses.
They welcomed war.
The Kauravas retired
for the night,
camping about two *yojanas*
away from the battlefield.

51 They came
to the sacred Sarasvatī
the river of dawn-pink waters.
At the foothills
of the Himālayas
they camped
on a level stretch of land
under the night sky.
They bathed in the river
and drank its water.

52 O rājā!
They were inspired
by the speech
of your son Duryodhana.
They were Kāla-captivated-creatures,
these Kṣatriyas.
They stayed with each other
for courage and comfort.

SECTION SIX

1 At the foothills of the Himālayas
the mahā-warriors gathered
(continued Sañjaya) and rested,
and prepared for battle.

2 Śalya
Citrasena
The mahā-chariot-hero Śakuni
Aśvatthāman
Kṛpa
Kṛtavarman of the Sātvatas

3 Suṣeṇa
Ariṣṭasena
Valiant Dhṛtasena
Jayatsena
And other rājās
Passed the night there.

4 After heroic Karṇa's death,
the Himālayas
were the only place
your sons could find peace
from the Pāṇḍavas
who were thirsting for total victory.

5 O rājā! Eager for battle,
they approached Duryodhana,
offered him pūjā-respect
and, in the presence
of Śalya,
they said:

6 "Let us do battle now.
Let us defeat our foes.
Appoint
a commander-in-chief,
who will devise
our new strategy to win."

7 Duryodhana drove his chariot
towards Aśvatthāman,
the finest of chariot-warriors,
excellently knowledgeable in war-skills,
like Antaka-Yama
himself in battle,

8 Handsome-limbed, thick-haired head,
graceful neck
with three lines like a conch-shell,
soft-speaking, large-lotus-eyed,
tiger-brave, and as dignified
as Meru mountain;

9 Shoulders, eyes, gait and voice
like those of Sthanu-Śiva's bull;
strong, large,
mascular arms;
a powerful, well-formed
upper chest;

10 In strength and swiftness
like Aruṇa's brother Garuḍa
or the wind itself;
lustrous like Āditya the sun,
gifted with the intelligence
of Uśanas-Śukra;

11 In radiance, shape, and charm of face
– these three –
like the moon; his body
glowing with the shine
of a cluster
of golden objects;

12 Tightly-knotted body-joints;
splendidly shaped thighs,
waist and hips;
lovely feet, fingers and nails,
as if fashioned by the Creator
from the finest guṇas;

13 Graced with every auspicious mark;
supremely skilful;
an ocean of *śruti*-learning;
vanquisher of enemies,
incapable of being vanquished
by them by force;

14 Expert in the ten divisions
and four parts
of the science of war;
wise in the four Vedas and their branches,
in legends,
in the fifth Veda as well . . .

15 Droṇa of mahā-tapasyā,
himself not born from a yoni,
worshipped Trayambaka
three-eyed Śiva assiduously,
and fathered him on Kṛpī,
also not born from a yoni.

16 Incomparable in accomplishments,
incomparable in the world
in handsomeness,
learned in every branch of knowledge,
truly an ocean of guṇas,
was defectless

17 Aśvatthāman.
Your son Duryodhana
went to him and said:
"We need your help
to gain victory
over the Pāṇḍavas.

18 You are our supreme refuge.
Son of my guru,
tell me:
Who should I appoint
commander-in-chief
of our forces?"

19 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman replied:
"High birth, handsomeness,
prowess, energy are Śalya's.
He possesses every guṇa.
Appoint him
commander-in-chief.

20 Leaving his sister's sons,
he has joined us,
because he is grateful to us.
Mahā-muscled Śalya
is like the mahā-general
Mahāsena-Kārtikeya.

21 O finest of kings!
Like the gods who made
invincible Mahāsena-Skanda
their commander-in-chief
against the anti-gods,
we will appoint Śalya."

22 The circle of earth-rulers
around Śalya
listened to the words
of Aśvatthāman
and shouted:
"Victory! Victory!"

23 Inspired, they began preparing
for battle.
Duryodhana descended
from his chariot
and stood
before Śalya,

24 The equal of Droṇa and Bhīṣma
in battle.
Palms folded in *añjali*
he said: "Dedicated friend!
The time has come
for a friend

25 To find out who is friend
and who is not.
You are our valiant
commander-in-chief.
You are stationed
at the head of the army.

26 The instant the Pāṇḍavas
and the Pāñcālas
see you on the battlefield,
they and their allies
and advisers
will lose their nerve."

27 Wise in the ways of words,
the Madra-rājā Śalya
heard the words
of rājā Duryodhana,
and replied
in the following words.

28 "O rājā!
O rājā of the Kauravas!
I will do what you say.
My life, my kingdom,
my wealth –
are at your disposal."

29 "O finest of warriors!
My maternal uncle!"
said Duryodhana.
"Be our saviour,
as Skanda was the saviour
of the gods.

30 O Indra-among-rājās! Brave hero!
Installed our general,
like Pāvaki-Skanda of the gods,
destroy our enemies
like Mahendra-Indra
destroyed the Dānava anti-gods."

SECTION SEVEN

1 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
The Madra-rājā Śalya
listened to rājā Duryodhana,
and said:

2 "O skilled-in-speech
mahā-muscled Duryodhana!
You think Krishna and Arjuna,
together in their chariot,
are the finest
of all chariot-heroes.

3 The strength of their muscular arms
is nothing
compared to mine.
The whole world,
all the gods and anti-gods
and humans –

4 I can, when roused to anger,
face in battle,
let alone the Pāṇḍavas.
I will defeat
all the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
and the Somakas too.

5 As your commander-in-chief,
rest assured
I will devise
a battle formation
that no enemy will succeed
in destroying.

6. This is the truth, Duryodhana.
Trust me."
The ruler of Madra said this,
and paused.
Rājā Duryodhana
was delighted.

7 O finest of the Bharatas!
O lord of the earth!
Despite his misgivings,
stationing Salya
in the centre of his army,
he installed him commander-in-chief.

8 O Bharata descendant!
After the installation,
lion-roaring war-cries
rose from the soldiers,
and martial music was struck
on a medley of instruments.

9 The mahā-chariot-heroes
of the kingdom of Madra,
in a burst of enthusiasm,
spontaneously praised
the glory of brilliant-in-battle
rājā Śalya:

10 "*Cirañjīva*, O rājā!
May you live for ever!
May you exterminate
your enemies!
With your mahā-strength,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mahā-powerful sons

11 Will rid the earth
of their enemies
and rule the entire world.
With your shakti
you can conquer
gods, anti-gods and humans.

12 How easy for you to rout
the Sṛñjayas and Somakas
trapped in mortal dharma!"
Extolled with such profuse
pūjā-respect,
the ruler of Madra,

13 The powerful hero,
was filled with a joy that is denied
to the unrefined and uncultured.
Śalya said, "Today,
on the battlefield,
the Pāñcālas and the Pāṇḍavas –

14 I will kill them all,
O rājā, or, failing,
go myself to heaven.
All will see me
today on the battlefield,
roaming fearlessly.

15 Today, the sons of Pāṇḍu,
Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Sātyaki, the Pāñcālas,
the Cedis,
the sons of Draupadī –
all of them –

16 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin,
all the Prabhadrakas,
with their own eyes
will see
the mahā-marvellous power
of my bow.

17 Today, Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
and the Siddhas
and the Cāraṇas
will witness
my weapons-valour
and the strength of my arms.

18 Let the mahā-chariot-heroes,
the Pāṇḍava brothers,
witness the wonders
of my weapons-valour
and the might
of my two arms –

19 And prepare themselves,
every way they can,
for the massive onslaught.
Today, I will send
the Pāṇḍavas fleeing
in all directions.

20 O radiant one! O Kaurava!
For your sake today,
I will excel Droṇa and Bhīṣma
and the charioteer's son Karṇa,
and roam the field of battle
as I please."

21 O respectworthy monarch!
O descendant of Bharata!
(continued Sañjaya) In this way
he removed the despair
that had gripped your warriors
after Karṇa's death.

22 Their confidence restored,
inspired once again,
they now believed
that Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
would be annihilated
by the Madra-rājā.

23 O bull-brave Bharata!
Brimming with great joy,
your soldiers retired
to their camps to sleep.
It was more than joy –
they were exhilarated.

24 Their happy shouts reached
the ears
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
In front of all the Kṣatriyas,
he said
to Vārṣṇeya-Krishna:

25 "O Mādhava-Krishna!
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
has installed as commander-in-chief
the pūjā-respected,
warrior-honoured, bow-expert
rājā-of-Madra Śalya.

26 O Mādhava-Krishna!
I have told you this.
Now it is up to you.
You are our leader,
our protector.
Do what you think is best."

27 Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Vāsudeva-Krishna
said to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:
"I know Artāyana's son
rājā Śalya very well,
O descendant of Bharata.

28 He is valiant
and mahā-energetic,
an exceptional mahātmā.
A versatile warrior,
he is skilled
in all aspects of warfare.

29 In my opinion,
the Madra-rājā
certainly equals,
and maybe even excels
Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Karṇa
in battle.

30 O Bharata descendant!
O lord of men!
However I try,
I cannot think of anyone
as good as he is
in the art of war.

31 On the field of battle,
he is better
than Śikhaṇḍin, Arjuna,
Bhīma,
Sātvata Sātyaki,
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

32 Mahārāja!
Brave like a lion, like an elephant,
the rājā of Madra
will lay waste
the dooms-day field of battle
like enraged Kāla.

33 O tiger-among-men!
Your prowess is
like that of a lion.
I cannot think of anyone
but you
who can face him.

34 O delight of the Kuru dynasty!
Not in this world,
not in the realm of the gods,
is there anyone
except you who can kill Śalya
in battle.

35 Which is why it is up to you
to kill him
as Maghavat-Indra killed Śambara,
when Śalya starts
his daily routine of massacring
your soldiers.

36 This hero is invincible.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
honours him hugely.
If the Madra-ruler
is killed in battle,
your victory is assured.

37 Mahārāja!
With him dead,
dies Duryodhana's
mahā-army.
So listen
to my words,

38 Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
and attack
the mahā-chariot-hero Madra-rājā.
O mahā-muscled one!
Kill him, as Vāsava-Indra
killed Nāmuci.

39 Don't say,
'He's my maternal uncle,
I'll be merciful.'
Respect Kṣatriya-dharma,
and kill
the ruler of Madra.

40 You have survived the ocean
of Droṇa and Bhīṣma,
the sea of Karṇa.
Śalya is a water-hole
the size of a cow's hoof print.
Don't drown in it.

41 Summon the power of your tapasyā,
the power of a Kṣatriya,
O rājā,
and kill in battle
the mahā-chariot-hero
Śalya."

42 Saying this,
finest-of-enemy-exterminators
Keśava-Krishna, that evening,
received the pūjā-respect
of the Pāṇḍavas,
and retired to his camp.

43 After Keśava-Krishna left,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
took leave
of his brothers,
the Pāñcālas
and the Somakas,

44 And slept peacefully that night,
like an elephant
from whose hide *śalya*-arrows
have been removed.
All the Pāñcāla
and Pāṇḍava bow-experts,

45 Exulting over the death
of Karṇa,
slept peacefully that night.
Their anxiety allayed,
an ocean crossed,
the brilliant-in-bowcraft mahā-chariot-heroes,

46 The Pāṇḍavas and their army,
celebrated the death of Karṇa
as a prelude
to their final victory,
and rejoiced that night,
O respect-deserving monarch.

SECTION EIGHT

1 Night passed (continued Sañjaya)
and rājā Duryodhana said
to your soldiers: "Mahā-chariot-heroes,
don armour, prepare for battle."

2 At the rājā's command,
they sprang to attention –
some readied the chariots,
others hurried in different directions;

3 Some caparisoned the elephants;
foot-soldiers
donned armour;
and thousands of soldiers
swiftly spread carpets
in the chariots.

4 O lord of the earth!
Sombre music
emanated from many instruments.
What a cacophony
of warriors busily bustling
for battle!

5 O Bharata descendant!
A massive congregation
of not-yet-dead warriors
could be seen
swarming the battlefield,
determined to die.

6 With the rājā of Madra
as their commander-in-chief,
the mahā-chariot-heroes
deployed the army
in various strategic divisions
on the battlefield.

7 Then all your warriors,
with Kṛpa,
Kṛtavarman,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
and Subala's son Śakuni,
aproached your son

8 Along with many other rulers,
and agreed upon
the following battle-plan:
"No Kaurava warrior
will fight alone by himself
with the Pāṇḍavas.

9 Whoever singly battles
with the Pāṇḍavas,
and whoever deserts a Kaurava
battling singly –
both will suffer the five major evils,
and the minor ones.

10 Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman also
must not fight alone.
We will fight as one, collectively."
Employing this tactic,
the mahā-chariot-heroes
prepared to advance,

11 Under the command of Śalya,
the rājā of Madra.
O rājā!
For that mahā-battle,
the Pāṇḍavas also devised
their own strategy,

12 And marched from all sides
against the ranks
of the Kauravas.
O finest of the Bharatas!
The charging ranks roared
like an agitated ocean.

13 The horses and elephants
advanced like heaving waves.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"I have heard
of Droṇa's and Bhīṣma's
and Rādheya-Karṇa's deaths.

14 Tell me all about the fall
of Śalya
and my son Duryodhana.
Sañjaya, how was Śalya
killed in battle
by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira?

15 How was my mahā-muscled son
Duryodhana
killed by Bhīma?"
Sañjaya replied:
That fierce carnage of men,
elephants and horses,

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16 I will now describe.
O rājā! Be still,
and listen to me.
O rājā! Your sons
cherished in their minds
the firm hope –

17 After the deaths of Droṇa,
Bhīṣma,
and the charioteer's son Karṇa –
that Śalya would surely,
O respectworthy monarch,
kill all the Pāṇḍavas.

18 That hope comforted their hearts,
O Bharata descendant.
With the mahā-chariot-hero Śalya
installed
as their protector
on the field of battle,

19 Your sons in their heart of hearts
felt safe and secure.
When, after the death of Karṇa,
the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
began shouting
lion-roars of victory,

20 Your sons, O rājā,
were gripped
by mahā-fear.
The famed-for-valour
Madra-rājā Śalya
reassured the warriors,

21 Mahārāja, by devising a huge
battle-formation
called the Sarvatobhadra,
on whose strength
the famed-for-valour Madra-rājā
attacked Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,

22 Shaking his massive, heavy,
    beautiful,
swift-shooting bow.
    The chariot of mahā-chariot-hero Śalya
was pulled
    by splendid Sindhu horses,

23 And his charioteer, mahārāja,
    added to the glory
of the vehicle.
    Ensconced in the chariot,
the brave
    foe-crushing hero Śalya,

24 Well-armed for battle,
    dispelled the fears
of your sons, mahārāja.
    Clad in armour,
the Madra-rājā stood
    at the head of the formation;

25 With him were the heroic
    Madra-warriors
and the indomitable sons of Karṇa.
    On the left
was Kṛtavarman,
    protected by the Trigartas.

26 On the right was Kṛpa,
    protected
by the Śakas and Yavanas;
    in the rear
was Aśvatthāman,
    protected by the Kāmbojas.

27 In the centre was Duryodhana,
    protected
by bull-brave Kaurava warriors,
    and with him,
was Subala's son Śakuni
    with a large force of cavalry.

28 With Śakuni
was the mahā-chariot-hero
Kaitavya-Ulūka with his army.
The army-exterminating
mahā-bowmen Pāṇḍavas,
organising their army

29 In three divisions,
advanced on your warriors,
O mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
The three were led
by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin
and the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki.

30 A common objective
propelled their advance:
kill Śalya's warriors.
Surrounded
by his soldiers,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,

31 The bull-brave Pāṇḍava,
had one aim:
kill Śalya.
Destroyer-of-enemy-armies
mahā-bow-expert Arjuna
attacked Hāridikya-Kṛtavarman

32 And the Saṁśaptaka contingent
with a massive show of force.
Bhīma
and the Somaka
mahā-chariot-heroes
targeted Gautama-Kṛpa.

33 O Indra-among-rājās!
They were determined
to kill their foes on the field.
Mādrī's sons Nakula and Sahadeva
attacked the mahā-chariot hero Śakuni
and Ulūka,

[IX:8:34-39]

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34 Targeting the combined might
of their armies.
This was how
ten thousand warriors
of your army
faced the Pāṇḍavas.

35 They were armed
with various weapons and missiles
and irrepressible anger.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
"After the deaths of mahā-bowman Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, and mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa,

36 Sañjaya, and the depletion
of the Kaurava
and Pāṇḍava ranks,
and the angry show
of aggressiveness by the sons
of Pṛtha-Kuntī,

37 Tell me, how many actually
remained of the might
of the two armies?"
Sañjaya replied:
"O rājā, what remained
of the two fighting forces –

38 How many we had to fight
for us on the field –
I will give you the details.
O bull-brave Bharata!
Eleven thousand
chariot-heroes,

39 Ten thousand
and seven hundred elephants,
all of two lakhs
of cavalry
remained of your army,
O Bharata descendant,

40 As well as
three crores of foot-soldiers.
Six thousand
chariot-heroes,
six thousand
elephant-riders,

41 Ten thousand
horse-riders,
a crore of foot-soldiers –
these made up
the Pāṇḍava survivors,
O Bharata descendant.

42 These were all who survived
to fight,
O bull-brave Bharata.
The Madra-rājā
stationed your soldiers strategically,
O Indra-among-rājās,

43 Convinced victory was his,
and attacked
the Pāṇḍava ranks.
The brave Pāṇḍavas,
also flushed with hope
of victory,

44 Tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas,
and the illustrious Pāñcālas
manoeuvred
their ranks.
Both armies,
bent on mutual murder,

45 Tigers-among-men
all of them,
stood face to face
that morning-*saṁdhyā*
on the battlefield.
Prabhu! Lord!
What followed next
was a fearful,
gory battle
between your forces
and the ranks
of your enemies.

SECTION NINE

1 Sañjaya continued:
O Indra-among-rājās!
A heinous, fear-fanning god-and-
anti-god-clash between
the Kauravas and the Sṛñjayas!

2 Foot-soldiers and chariots,
elephants
and thousands of horse-riders
displayed their valour
in indiscriminate slaughter
on the battlefield.

3 The trumpeting
of massive-bodied elephants
was a maha-cacophony
that resembled
the awesome rumbling
of dark rain-clouds.

4 So many chariot-heroes
trampled and crushed
by rutting elephants,
so many mangled heroes
fleeing in panic
for their lives.

5 O descendant of Bharata!
On that battlefield,
expertly-trained chariot-heroes
despatched horse-riders
and foot-soldiers
to the other world.

6 So many bowmen surrounded
mahā-chariot-heroes,
crowding on them
one by one,
and despatching them
to the abode of Yama.

7 O rājā! So many
expertly-trained horse-riders
surrounded mahā-chariot-heroes
and slew them
with śakti-spears
and *ṛṣṭi*-swords.

8 So many mahā-chariot-heroes
surrounded elephants
and chariot-heroes
and poorly protected
fleeing mahā-chariot-heroes,
and slaughtered them.

9 Mahārāja!
Some elephant-riders
angrily surrounded
an arrow-showering
chariot-hero,
and killed him.

10 O descendant of Bharata!
Elephant-rider
against elephant-rider,
chariot-hero against chariot-hero –
mutual murder with spears,
lances and *nārāca*-arrows.

11 Chariots and elephants and horses
running over
terrified foot-soldiers
and butchering them
and then disappearing –
a scene of mahā-confusion!

12 Like *haṁsa*-swans gliding
down Himālayan foothills
to drink water,
yak-tail-fan-waving
horse-riders swooped
across the battlefield.

13 O lord of the world!
Beautiful the field of battle,
struck by the hoof-beats of horses,
like a girl
scratched by the nails
of her lover.

14 Horse-hooves thudding,
chariot-wheels rattling,
confused clamour
of foot-soldiers,
the trumpeting
of elephants,

15 The noise of martial music,
the reverberation
the blown conch-shells –
O Bharata descendant,
the battlefield shuddered
as if struck by thunder.

16 The twanging of bows,
the dazzle
of weapons and missiles,
the shimmer
of coats-of-mail –
a blinding brilliance!

17 So many human arms,
handsome like the trunks
of elephants,
sliced by weapons,
toppling and thudding
on the ground . . .

18 Mahārāja!
Severed human heads
dropping
on the field of battle
like so many fruits
of the palm tree.

19 O descendant of Bharata!
The field of battle
was littered
with blood-smeared severed heads
like a carpet
of *nalini*-lotuses.

20 The battlefield, O rājā,
covered over
with lifeless, mangled heads
with staring eyes,
looked like a spread
of red *puṇḍarīka*-lotuses.

21 Incredibly beautiful, that field;
O Indra-among-rājās,
with the sandalpaste-smeared,
ornamented severed arms
scattered like the mahā-war-flags
of Śakra-Indra.

22 The entire battlefield
filled with the sliced thighs
of all those kings,
those Indras-among-men,
like so many
trunks of elephants.

23 Like a lovely forest
full of flowering trees
was the battlefield
with its countless heads,
war umbrellas
and yak-tail fans.

24 Mahārāja!
The blood-drenched bodies
of fearless warriors
looked
like a travelling congregation
of flames-of-the-forest.

25 And the elephants,
mutilated with arrows
and *tomara*-lances,
looked like so many
wind-battered,
scattered clouds.

26 Pursued and pierced
by the arrows
of the mahātmā warriors,
the elephants, mahārāja,
dispersed in all directions
like wind-driven clouds.

27 Like masses of clouds
they sprawled on the field,
like mountains shattered
by thunderbolts at the time
of the dissolution
of a yuga.

28 Whole heaps
of slaughtered horses,
and their riders,
could be seen
on the battlefield,
like toppled hills.

29 A river of death
  on the battlefield,
flowing to the other world:
  blood its waters,
chariots its eddies, flagpoles its trees,
  bones its pebbles,

30 Arms its crocodiles,
  bows its swift current,
elephants large boulders,
  horses its rocks,
fat and marrow its mire,
  umbrellas swans, maces rafts.

31 Armour and head-gear
  its moss,
war-flags its overhanging branches,
  cakra-wheels its *cakravāka*-birds,
replete
  with *triveṇu*-snakes.

32 The Kauravas and Sṛñjayas
  its banks,
that fearful river enhanced
  the joy of the valiant,
and fed the terror
  of the timid.

33 Warriors with arms
  as strong as bludgeons
tried to cross
  in their vehicles
this river that flowed
  to the other world.

34 O lord of the world!
  When this battle,
that destroyed the four-fold divisions
  of the armies,
that resembled the clash
  of the gods and anti-gods,

35 Started, O foe-crusher,
many fear-stricken soldiers
called out
to friends and relatives,
but many refused
even to respond.

36 In that barbarous battle that broke
all boundaries of humanity,
Bhīma and Arjuna
succeeded
in stupefying
their enemies.

37 O lord of men!
Under their onslaught,
your warriors teetered
and tottered,
like a young girl
besotted with wine.

38 With their enemies bewildered,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and Bhīma
sounded their conches
and screamed
their lion-roars of victory.

39 As soon as they heard
that mahā-noise,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍin attacked,
placing Yudhiṣṭhira
at the head
of their army.

40 O lord of the world!
What we saw
was the weird and wonderful spectacle
of these two heroes
attacking Śalya,
each separately.

41 O crusher of your foes!
Weapons-expert,
brave-in-battle and swift-acting
Nakula and Sahadeva,
yearning for victory,
advanced against Śalya.

42 O bull-brave Bharata!
Flushed with hopes of victory,
the Pāṇḍavas
again and again
wounded Śalya
with countless arrows.

43 Even as your sons watched,
O mahārāja,
Śalya's warriors were devastated
by the arrow-showers,
and broke ranks and fled
in all directions.

44 Mahā-shouts of "Hai! Hai!"
burst
from the ranks of your army.
O Bharata descendant!
The pursuing Pāṇḍavas shouted:
"Stop! Stop!"

45 Both sides hoped for victory,
but the Kṣatriyas
who won
were the Pāṇḍavas.
Defeated,
your fleeing soldiers

46 Left their loved ones:
sons, brothers,
grandfathers,
maternal uncles,
nephews and friends,
O descendant of Bharata.

47 O bull-brave Bharata!
Thinking only
of saving their own skins,
your warriors
on horses and elephants fled
as fast as they could.

SECTION TEN

1 Sañjaya continued: Seeing them flee,
the Madra-rājā Śalya
ordered his charioteer:
"Rush my chariot over there!

2 Look!
There is Pāṇḍu's son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
standing resplendent
under the shade
of his umbrella.

3 Drive me to him fast,
O charioteer!
And witness my prowess!
Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira
will be my victim today
on the battlefield."

4 Obeying orders,
Śalya's charioteer
sped him to the spot
where Dharma's truth-speaking son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was standing,

5 With a massive Pāṇḍava force.
Single-handed,
Śalya stood firm,
blocking the Pāṇḍava army
like the ocean shore
blocking surging waves.

6 O respectworthy monarch!
Like a fast-flowing stream
blocked by a mountain,
the advancing Pāṇḍavas
stopped in front
of the lone Śalya.

7 Seeing the Madra-rājā
standing rock-firm,
the Kaurava warriors returned
to the battlefield,
determined now to fight
to the death.

8 O rājā! One by one
they re-grouped.
The result was
a mahā-gory battle
in which blood
flowed like water.

9 Unbeaten-in-battle Nakula
faced Citrasena,
the son of Karṇa.
Brandishing brilliant bows,
brave warriors both,
they released

10 A torrential downpour
of arrows
at each other,
like two rain-clouds
from north and south
drenching the earth.

11 I could not make out
Pāṇḍu's son Nakula
from Citrasena.
Both were absolute
masters of weapons
and chariot-warfare.

12 Each was looking
for his enemy's weak spot.
In the process,
with a sharp,
broad-headed *bhalla*-arrow,
Citrasena

13 Sliced Nakula's arrow,
O mahārāja,
near the fist-grip.
After shattering the bow,
with gold-feathered,
stone-sharpened

14 Arrows – three of them –
he struck Nakula's forehead,
but Nakula
remained unmoved.
With more sharp arrows
he killed Nakula's horses,

15 And with another three
shredded his flag
and killed his charioteer.
Struck in his forehead
by three arrows
fired by the arms of his enemy,

16 Nakula, O rājā,
looked like a resplendent
three-peaked mountain.
His bow smashed,
chariot broken, Nakula,
with sword and shield,

17 Jumped down from his chariot
like a lion
from a hill top.
Citrasena deluged him
with a shower
of arrows.

18 Agile Nakula repulsed
the arrow shower
with his shield.
The untiring versatile warrior Nakula
jumped
into Citrasena's chariot –

19 For Nakula
was a mahā-muscled hero –
in front of all the soldiers.
Then, ear-ringed and crowned,
handsome-nosed
and large-eyed Citrasena

20 Was beheaded on the field
by Pāṇḍava Nakula.
Resplendent like the day-maker sun
Divākara,
headless Citrasena toppled
behind his chariot.

21 Seeing Citrasena eliminated,
the Pāṇḍava mahā-chariot-heroes
shouted "*Sādhu*!
Well done!"
and broke into ceaseless lion-roars
of victory.

22 Seeing their brother killed,
Karṇa's two other sons,
the mahā-chariot-heroes
Suṣeṇa and Satyasena,
releasing a volley
of variegated arrows,

23 Launched a swift joint attack
on the Pāṇḍava
finest-of-chariot-heroes Nakula.
O rājā!
Like two tigers attacking
an elephant in a forest,

24 The two brutal brothers
targeted
the mahā-chariot-hero Nakula
with their arrows
like two clouds pouring
torrential rain.

25 Hemmed in with arrows,
the Pāṇḍava Nakula
nonetheless smiled;
readying another bow,
he climbed
into another chariot,

26 And stood firm on the field,
an angry hero,
like Antaka-Yama,
the god of death.
O rājā! The two brothers,
with curved, knotted arrows,

27 Tried to demolish
the chariot of Nakula,
O lord of the earth!
Still smiling, on the field,
with four sharp arrows,
Nakula

28 Slaughtered the four horses
of Satyasena.
Next,
with a gold-feathered,
stone-sharpened
nārāca-arrow,

29 Pāṇḍava Nakula,
O Indra-among-rājās,
disintegrated Satyasena's bow.
But Satyasena selected
another bow
and another chariot.

30 And Satyasena and Suṣeṇa
together attacked
the Pāṇḍava Nakula.
Unperturbed,
the valiant son of Mādrī,
Nakula

31 Wounded both the brothers
with two arrows each,
O mahārāja.
Incensed, Suṣeṇa targeted
the mahā-powerful bow
of Pāṇḍava Nakula,

32 And, smiling,
that mahā-chariot-hero sliced it
with a razor-sharp arrow.
Possessed by anger,
Nakula readied
another bow,

33 And with five arrows
he wounded Suṣeṇa,
with one shredded his flag.
O respectworthy monarch!
He destroyed Satyasena's bow
and leather finger-guards.

34 Witnessing this,
the soldiers broke
into noisy acclamation.
Satyasena readied
another heavy
foe-frustrating bow

35 And shrouded
Pāṇḍu's son Nakula
with a swarm of arrows.
Slayer-of-enemy-heroes Nakula
repulsed
all those arrows,

36 And with two arrows each,
he wounded
Satyasena and Suṣeṇa.
The two brothers,
separately,
with miscellaneous arrows,

37 Harassed Nakula,
and with very sharp arrows,
O Indra-among-rājās,
they wounded his charioteer.
Satyasena, targeting
Nakula's chariot and bow,

38 Heroic Satyasena, with two arrows
destroyed his bow
and his chariot's shaft.
The chariot-hero,
standing firm,
aimed a chariot-*śakti*-spear,

39 Whose rod was made of gold,
and tip unbreakable.
O radiant lord!
It was polished with oil;
it was like a tongue-flickering
poisonous Nāga-Kanyā she-snake.

40 Aiming straight at Satyasena,
Nakula released the *śakti*-spear.
O king!
It sped to its target,
and pierced
the heart of Satyasena.

41 Losing his mind, losing his life,
Satyasena toppled dead
on the ground.
Anger blinded Suṣeṇa
when he got news
of his brother's death.

42 Wasting no time,
he rained arrows on Pāṇḍu's son
who was fighting on foot.
With four arrows
he killed Nakula's four horses,
with five shredded his war-flag,

43 With three killed his charioteer.
Then Karṇa's son Suṣeṇa
screamed his lion-roar.
Seeing the mahā-chariot-hero Nakula
deprived of his chariot,
Draupadī's son

44 Sutasoma rushed
to the rescue
of his father.
Quickly climbing
into the chariot of Sutasoma,
Nakula,

45 Most excellent of Bharatas,
shone like a lion
on a mountain.
Brandishing another bow,
he recommenced the battle
with Suṣeṇa.

46 Shooting torrents of arrows
on each other,
the two mahā-chariot-heroes
were embroiled
in a furious struggle
to murder each other.

47 With three arrows
Suṣeṇa blocked Pāṇḍava Nakula,
and with twenty
he targeted
the arms and chest
of Sutasoma.

48 Mahārāja!
Slayer-of-hostile-heroes Nakula,
a valiant warrior,
angrily shrouded Suṣeṇa
on all sides
with swarms of arrows.

49 Then he targeted
the son of Karṇa
with a super-sharp,
incredibly swift
ardha-candra
half-moon arrow.

50 O finest of kings!
In the presence
of all the warriors,
that arrow, incredibly,
severed Suṣeṇa's head
from his body.

51 O rājā! Fatally felled
by mahā-ātmaned Nakula,
Suṣeṇa's trunk
thudded on the ground
like a river-bank tree
collapsing in its waters.

52 O bull-brave Bharata!
Your warriors witnessed
the prowess of Nakula
and the slaughter
of Karṇa's two sons,
and fled in terror

53 Mahārāja! It was Śalya,
the foe-destroying
illustrious rājā of Madra,
the valiant commander-in-chief
who came
to the rescue.

54 With deafening lion-roars,
O mahārāja,
and twanging of his bow,
he stood his ground,
encouraging the Kauravas
to return to the field.

55 Reassured, O rājā,
that Śalya's formidable bow
would protect them,
relieved of their fears,
the retreating warriors
returned and re-grouped.

56 The warriors of your mahā-army
encircled
in formation around Śalya,
the rājā of Madra,
and prepared for the offensive
against the enemy.

57 On the other side Sātyaki, Bhīma,
and Mādrī's twin sons
Nakula and Sahadeva
placed foe-destroying
but gentle Yudhiṣṭhira at the head
of their army, and advanced.

58 Deploying soldiers
to surround Yudhiṣṭhira on all sides,
the heroes screamed
their lion-roars, twanged their bows,
and blew their conches –
a fierce cacophony!

59 Similarly, all your warriors
formed a ring
around the Madra-rājā,
and readied themselves
for battle
with renewed enthusiasm and valour.

60 Then began the battle
that terrified the timid,
a gory clash
between two opposing armies
who were determined
to fight to the death.

61 O lord of the world! O rājā!
Thus began
the battle like that
between the gods and anti-gods,
sure to increase the population
of the kingdom of Yama.

62 And ape-bannered Arjuna too,
O rājā, Pāṇḍu's son,
after massacring the Saṁśaptakas,
diverted his attention
to the Kaurava warriors
on the battlefield

63 And Dhṛṣṭadyumna also,
and the other Pāṇḍavas
devastated
your army
with incessant showers
of arrows.

64 The leaders of the Kaurava ranks
fell under the onslaught
of the arrows.
So bewildered were they,
they could not tell
one direction from another.

65 The arrows created utter chaos
in the Kaurava ranks.
Their chief warriors slain,
attacked
from all sides,
their offensive blocked . . .

66 O rājā! And so
the mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas
systematically
savaged the Kauravas
with volleys
of arrows

67 That killed hundreds
and thousands
of your sons' warriors.
The two armies
clashed
in a massive confrontation,

68 Like two swollen rivers sweeping
head on into each other.
O Indra-among-rājās!
In that mahā-war,
mahā-fear gripped your army
and the Pāṇḍava army.

SECTION ELEVEN

1 Sañjaya continued: Both the armies
locked in mutual slaughter;
warriors fleeing in terror;
elephants,

2 Foot-soldiers shouting and screaming
in that mahā-carnage;
countless horses butchered,
O mahārāja;

3 A heinous, horrendous massacre
of all embodied life;
clash of weapon
upon weapon;
confused encounters
of chariots and elephants;

4 The delight of the valiant,
the terror of the timid;
warring rivals planning sorties
of mutual murder;

5 A war of butchery
of awful shape and scale,
calculated
to increase the population
of the realm of Yama,
the god of death . . .

6 Early that morning,
around sunrise,
when the battle
that fed
the terror of the timid
was at its peak,

7 The Pāṇḍava ranks,
protected by mahā-ātmaned Arjuna,
unerringly accurate warriors,
determined to fight to the death,
advanced
upon your army.

8 The Pāṇḍavas began decimating
your ranks
with volleys of arrows,
and your warriors
retaliated
with equal ferocity.

9 Assailed by the formidable
sure-aimed
Pāṇḍava warriors,
the Kaurava ranks scattered
like a herd of she-deer
in a forest-fire.

10 Seeing your enfeebled army
stuck like a cow
in a swamp,
Śalya tried to rescue it
by swiftly attacking
the Pāṇḍavas.

11 In a fit of rage,
the Madra-rājā,
brandishing his excellent bow,
singly rushed against the Pāṇḍavas
who were ready
to fight to the death.

12 O ruler of the earth!
The radiant-with-repeated-victory
Pāṇḍavas
advanced towards Śalya
and obscured him
with sharp arrows.

13 In front of the very eyes
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Madra-rājā
mahā-chariot-hero
terrorised the Pāṇḍavas
with hundreds of sharp arrows.

14 That was when
many inauspicious omens
were noticed.
The mountain-heavy earth
shuddered
with a rending noise.

15 From the sun-maṇḍala
in the sky
streamed *śūla*-lances
with flaming handles;
their incandescence
flooded the battlefield.

[IX:11:16-21]

Transcreated by P. Lal

16 O lord of the world! O king!
    Deer
and buffaloes and birds
    passed by,
keeping your army on their right,
    in auspicious respect.

17 Śukra-Venus and Maṅgala-Mars,
    in conjunction
with Budha-Mercury,
    appeared at the back of the Pāṇḍavas
and in front
    of the Kauravas.

18 Flames surged from weapons,
    blinding the eyes
and scorching the earth.
    Crows and owls
perched on soldiers' heads
    and on war-flags.

19 O lord of men!
    What followed next
was a calamitous clash
    between the forces
of the two
    opposing armies.

20 The entire Kaurava army,
    O rājā,
attacked the Pāṇḍavas.
    Like thousand-eyed Sahasradṛk-Indra,
an arrow-deluge
    by Śalya,

21 That dharmātmā ruler,
    was released
on Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
    Gold-feathered,
stone-sharpened arrows
    on Bhīma,

22 Draupadī's five sons,
Mādrī and Pāṇḍu's sons
Nakula and Sahadeva,
on Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
on Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
on Śikhaṇḍin –

23 All of them he targeted
with ten arrows each.
And then, mahā-powerful Śalya
released a shower of arrows,
like Maghavat-Indra
sending rain in summer.

24 O rājā! One could see
the destruction
of the ranks
of the Prabhadrakas
as Śalya's arrows
sliced through them.

25 The arrows of Śalya
fell on the warriors
like swarms of bees,
like hordes of locusts,
like thunderbolts
from the sky.

26 Pierced by Śalya's arrows,
elephants and horses
and chariot-heroes
reeled and rolled,
and tottered and fell,
and screamed in agony.

27 He was like Antaka-Yama
let loose by Kāla
to destroy the cosmos –
the furious Madra-ruler
displaying his prowess
on the field of battle.

28 The mahā-powerful lord
of Madra
roared like a rain-cloud.
Brutalised by Śalya,
the warriors
of the Pāṇḍava army

29 Fled to the one-without-an-enemy
Ajātaśatru
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
to escape the arrows
of quick-fingered,
swift-shooting Śalya,

30 Who now targeted Yudhiṣṭhira
with a torrent
of super-sharp arrows.
But rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
incensed, stopped the charging
horses and foot-soldiers

31 With his own sharp arrows,
like an elephant-driver
blocking a massive elephant
with iron hooks.
Śalya then shot
a dreadful snake-poison arrow,

32 Which sped swiftly,
grazed mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira,
and slid into the earth.
This so enraged wolf-waisted Bhīma
that with seven arrows
he wounded Śalya.

33 Sahadeva with five,
Nakula with ten,
and Draupadī's five sons
with a host of arrows
succeeded in wounding
enemy-eliminating Śalya.

34 Mahārāja! Like a rain-cloud
drenching a mountain,
Śalya retaliated with showers of arrows.
Seeing Śalya
surrounded and attacked
by Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,

35 Burning-with-anger Kṛtavarman
and Kṛpa
rushed to his assistance.
In the meantime,
mahā-valiant Ulūka,
Subala's son Śakuni,

36 Mahā-powerful Aśvatthāman,
and your sons
turned up just in time,
and joined forces
in order to save Śalya
in his crisis.

37 With three arrows Kṛtavarman
blocked Bhīma,
and wounded him,
and with a heavy arrow shower
prevented
any further advance.

38 Kṛpa in a burst of anger
blocked Dhṛṣṭadyumna
with an arrow-downpour.
And Śakuni attacked
Draupadī's five sons
and Mādrī's twins.

39 Finest-of-warriors,
brave and formidable Duryodhana
attacked
Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna,
and wounded
both of them.

40 O lord of the world!
In this way
the battlefield saw
hundred of fearful
and wonderful duels
and combats.

41 Kṛtavarman succeeded in killing
the bear-brown horses
of Bhīma's chariot.
Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma
leapt on the field
from his horse-less chariot,

42 Brandishing his mace,
like the rod-wielding
Spirit-of-Cosmic-Time Kāla.
The Madra-rājā
succeeded in killing
the horses of Sahadeva.

43 Sahadeva retaliated
by fatally piercing Śalya's son
with his sword.
Ācārya Gotama-Kṛpa
began battle
with Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

44 Both adversaries confronting
each other
with cool valour.
With ten arrows
for each of the five sons
of Draupadī,

45 Ācārya Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
with controlled fury,
smiled and launched
his offensive.
Kṛtavarman killed the horses
of Bhīma's new chariot.

46 His horses killed, Pāṇḍu's son,
mahā-powerful Bhīma
jumped down from his chariot,
angrily waving his mace,
like rod-wielding Kāla,
the Spirit of Cosmic Time

47 He smashed the chariot
of Kṛtavarman,
and slaughtered his horses.
Quickly abandoning
his ruined chariot,
Kṛtavarman fled.

48 O rājā! In the meantime,
Śalya angrily
continued his massacre
of the Somaka and Pāṇḍava ranks.
With sharp arrows,
he pinned down Yudhiṣṭhira.

49 This so infuriated valiant Bhīma
that,
biting his lips,
yearning to kill Śalya
on the battlefield,
brandishing his mace

50 Like rod-wielding Yama
on the Kāla-night
of universal doom,
Bhīma embarked
on a massacre of elephants,
horses and humans.

51 Made entirely of iron,
laced with gold filigree,
the mace was furnished with a sling,
dazzling like a meteor,
dreadful like thunder,
fearsome like a she-snake.

52 Indeed, like a fragrant-sandal-
paste-and-*aguru*-unguent-
anointed sexually desirable girl,
it was smeared instead
with fat and marrow and blood;
it looked like the tongue of Yama.

53 Hundreds of bells tinkled on it;
it resembled
the thunderbolt of Vāsava-Indra;
its shape was that
of a venomous sloughed-off snake;
it was wet with elephant rut.

54 It terrorised its foes,
and delighted
the soldiers it protected.
This mountain-shattering mace
was celebrated
in the world of men.

55 This was the very mace
with which mahā-powerful Bhīma
challenged on Kailāsa
the loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend
of Maheśvara-Śiva,
Kubera.

56 This was the very mace
with which
mahā-powerful Pārtha-Bhīma
angrily killed māyā-magic-making Guhyakas
in the palace
of Dhanada-Kubera,

57 Despite their repeated warnings,
because he was determined
to please Draupadī.
The thunder-gem-diamond-
empowered mace,
radiant with thunderbolt-glory –

58 This was the mace with which
maha-muscled Bhīma
rushed against Śalya.
Wielding that horrendous-
noise-making mace,
battle-brilliant Bhīma

59 Slaughtered all four
mahā-swift chariot-horses of Śalya.
Incensed Śalya
hurled a *tomara*-javelin
at the broad chest
of Bhīma.

60 Heroic Śalya shouted as the javelin
pierced Bhīma's armour
and lodged in his body.
Unperturbed, wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma pulled the weapon
out of his chest,

61 And hurled it back
at the chest
of the Madra-rājā's charioteer.
His chest ripped,
vomiting blood,
his mind whirling,

62 Terror-stricken, the charioteer
toppled off the chariot.
The rājā of Madra
retreated,
astounded at the fact
of his own failure.

63 Dharmātmā Śalya
lifted his mace
and stared at his enemy.
Witnessing that fearful feat
of never-tiring-in-battle
Bhīma,
the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
were delighted,
and offered him their pūjā-respect.

SECTION TWELVE

1 Sañjaya continued:
Seeing his charioteer struck
before his very eyes,
Śalya swiftly
picked up his mace,
and stood on the field,
O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
firm as a mountain.

2 Resplendent like the doomsday fire
of Kāla,
like noose-in-hand
Antaka-Yama,
like high-peaked Kailāsa,
like thunderbolt-hurling Vāsava-Indra,

3 Like trident-wielding,
yellow-eyed Haryakṣa-Śiva,
like an ichor-streaming elephant
in a forest, he stood there.
Bhīma rushed at him,
mace upraised.

4 Conches blared,
thousands of drums and trumpets
sounded,
and lion-roars of victory
boosted the morale
of the brave warriors.

5 Seeing the two adversaries
facing each other
like two mahā-elephants,
the soldiers offered them
pūjā-respect, exclaiming
"*Sādhu*! *Sādhu*! Excellent! Excellent!"

6 “No warrior in the world,”
they declared,
“except the Madra-ruler
and the Yādava Balarāma,
has the courage to face
the prowess of Bhīma.

7 Nor can any warrior
other than Bhīma
have the courage to face
the furious mace
of the mahā-ātmaned
ruler of Madra.”

8 Snorting like bulls,
the Madra-rājā
and wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
circled each other warily
in maṇḍala strategies,
leaping and thrusting.

9 In maṇḍala-circling,
in varied mace-wielding,
it was clear
that those two lions-among-men
were identical
in every respect.

10 The fear-generating mace
of Śalya
was plated
with specially heated gold
and dazzled
like fire.

11 As for the mace
of mahā-ātmaned,
expert-in-maṇḍala-manoeuvres Bhīma,
it resembled
lightning flashing
from dark clouds.

[IX:12:12-17]

Transcreated by P. Lal

12 When the Madra-rājā's mace
struck
the mace of Bhīma,
it seemed to burst into flame,
with sparks
crackling around it.

13 Similarly, when Bhīma's mace
struck Śalya's,
a shower of sparks
scattered
from Śalya's weapon.
A wonderful spectacle!

14 Two mahā-tusked elephants
colliding,
two mahā-horned bulls grappling –
the mace-duellists
fought
like two hook-goaded beasts.

15 Bruises appeared on their bodies;
blood gushed out,
in no time.
They looked like two
kiṁśuka flames-of-the-forest
in full bloom.

16 Battered right and left
by thudding blows
from the Madra-rājā's mace,
mahā-muscled Bhīma
remained unmoved,
as firm as a mountain.

17 Likewise, the repeated blows
of Bhīma's mace
had as little effect
on Śalya, O rājā,
as an elephant's tusks
on a mahā-mountain.

18 The thudding of the two maces
of the duelling
lions-among-men
reverberated
in all the directions
like two peals of thunder.

19 Lifting their maces high,
stepping back,
stopping mid-track,
weaving circular maṇḍala-patterns,
the two mahā-valiant heroes
fought on.

20 Suddenly, each took eight steps
forward
and smashed his adversary
with his iron mace.
A superhuman spectacle!
A bloody battle!

21 Both brilliant-in-battle,
both bent
on destroying each other
with maṇḍala tactics,
both putting on a wondrous vision
of valour.

22 Once again they lifted
their fearful maces
and with intricate
maṇḍala movements
attacked each other
like two tall-peaked mountains.

23 Experts both of them
in the theory and practice of battle,
they stood
deadlocked on the field of battle,
fuelled
by their anger.

24 And then, they suddenly attacked
    and fell on the field,
grievously wounded,
    like two flagpoles of Indra.
The soldiers burst
    into shouts of "Hai! Hai!"

25 Wounded in all parts of their bodies,
    both
were agitated and confused.
    Gathering
the strong-as-a-bull ruler of Madra
    in his own chariot,

26 Kṛpa swiftly drove Śalya
    far away
to a safe distance.
    In the twinkling of an eye,
recovering
    and standing up,

27 But reeling as if drunk,
    mace-wielding Bhīma
challenged Śalya again.
    And your soldiers,
brandishing all kinds
    of weapons and missiles,

28 And creating a deafening din
    with musical instruments,
marched against the Pāṇḍavas.
    Raising high
their weapons-loaded arms
    and shouting mahā-war-cries,

29 Duryodhana and his followers,
    O mahārāja,
advanced against their enemies.
    Seeing them
advancing swiftly,
    the sons of Pāṇḍu

30 Screaming lion-roars of victory,
counter-attacked
Duryodhana and his followers.
O bull-brave Bharata!
The attack of the Pāṇḍavas
was blocked by your sons

31 With *prāsa*-barbed-darts,
one of which pierced
the chest of Cekitāna.
Wounded by your sons,
he collapsed
in his chariot,

32 His entire body
awash with blood.
Seeing Cekitāna
fatally stricken,
the Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes

33 Released a steady and ceaseless
shower of arrows
on the Kauravas.
Hopeful of victory,
the Pāṇḍavas moved at will
among your soldiers.

34 Mahārāja, it was a sight
worth seeing.
And then,
Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman
and the mahā-chariot-hero
son of Subala, Śakuni,

35 With the rājā-of-Madra Śalya
in front,
targeted Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
The supremely valiant warrior
who killed
Bhāradvāja-Droṇa,

36 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, became,
O mahārāja,
Duryodhana's specific target.
Three thousand soldiers,
inspired, O rājā,
by your son,

37 Placing Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
at their head,
attacked Vijaya-Arjuna.
Abandoning their love of life,
with Vijaya and victory
firm in their minds,

38 Your soldiers, O rājā,
swept through the enemy ranks
like *haṁsa*-swans plunging
into a large lake.
Then commenced a battle
of savage mutual slaughter,

39 Each seeking the other's death,
each delighting in killing.
O rājā!
As they entered
the exterminator-of-valiant-warriors
battlefield,

40 A fierce and fearful dust-storm
shrouded the earth.
We could make out
the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas
only
by the names they shouted.

41 For that was the way
even they could tell
who was who.
O tiger-among-men!
So much blood that the dust
settled and congealed!

42 When that happened,
the directions
became clear and visible.
And that led
to the recommencement
of the fierce, fearful battle.

43 Not one of your warriors
or of your enemy's
turned away from battle.
All yearned to reach
the realm of Brahmā;
hoping to win.

44 With brilliant displays of
military valour,
all had their eyes on heaven.
Determined to repay
their debts to their lords,
these loyal soldiers

45 Fixed their minds
on the attainment of heaven,
and fought with zealous bravery.
Shooting a variety
of weapons and missiles,
the mahā-chariot-heroes

46 Roared like thunder as they engaged
in mutual massacre.
"Kill!"
"Strike!"
"Capture!" "Attack!"
"Cut him to pieces!"

47 These were the only commands
heard
from your soldiers and theirs.
Mahārāja!
Śalya targeted
Dharmaputra-Yudhiṣṭhira,

48 The mahā-chariot-hero,
for killing,
and shot super-sharp arrows at him.
Mahārāja!
With forty *nārāca*-arrows,
Prthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,

49 Who knew
about a body's vulnerable parts –
smilingly struck at Śalya's vital organs.
Eager to kill Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
with arrows,
mahā-powerful Śalya

50 Retaliated by angrily shooting
many *kaṅka*-feathered arrows
at his adversary.
Then, mahārāja,
with a volley
of curved and knotted arrows

51 He wounded Yudhiṣṭhira
before the very eyes
of the warring soldiers.
Then mahā-illustrious
anger-inflamed Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
targeted the Madra-rājā

52 With a counter-volley
of sharp
kaṅka-and-peacock-feathered arrows.
Then, Candrasena with seventy,
Śalya's charioteer
with nine arrows,

53 And Drumasena with sixtyfour arrows,
were killed
by the mahā-chariot-hero Yudhiṣṭhira.
With his wheel-protectors killed
by the mahātmā Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
Śalya

54 Replied, O rājā,
by slaughtering
twentyfive Cedi warriors.
Sātyaki
with twentyfive arrows,
Bhīma with five,

55 Mādrī's twin sons
with one hundred sharp arrows,
were wounded by Śalya.
O finest of rājās!
On the battlefield,
targeting freely-roaming

56 Śalya,
Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira released a volley
of fierce, sharp,
snake-venomed shafts.
On the field, Śalya's war-flag,
by Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,

57 Was severed from its chariot
by a *bhalla*-arrow.
That war-flag,
lopped and shredded
by the mahā-ātmaned son of Pāṇḍu,
Yudhiṣṭhira, –

58 We saw it toppled
like a shattered mountain-peak.
His war-flag shattered,
and Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
standing facing him –
seeing this,

59 The infuriated Madra-rājā Śalya
released
a torrent of arrows at his foe.
Like a rain-bearing cloud,
Śalya unleashed
a deluge of arrows –

60 For he was a bull-brave
Kṣatriya of Kṣatriyas,
a warrior
of incalculable self-confidence.
Sātyaki, Bhīma,
Mādrī-and-Pāṇḍu's twin sons –

61 He wounded these four
with five arrows each,
and then concentrated on Yudhiṣṭhira,
on whose chest
we saw, as it were,
a whole mesh of arrows,

62 Like the sky, mahārāja,
covered
by a thick network of clouds.
With curved
and knotted arrows,
enraged Śalya,

63 The mahā-chariot-hero,
darkened Yudhiṣṭhira
and all the directions
around Yudhiṣṭhira,
including the sub-directions.
And rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was afflicted and baffled
by the net of arrows,
though he was a warrior
of wonderful valour –
as the anti-god Jāmbha
was baffled
by the slayer-of-Vṛtra Indra.

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 O respectworthy monarch! (said Sañjaya continued)
When the Madra-rājā Śalya
assailed Dharmarāja, Yudhiṣṭhira
Sātyaki, Bhīma, and Mādrī's twin sons

2 Quickly surrounded Śalya
with their chariots.
Seeing a solitary hero targeted
by many mahā-chariot-heroes,

3 Loud applause was heard
on the battlefield;
the Siddhas were overjoyed,
and with the munis
they exclaimed in one voice:
"Truly incredible!"

4 Because Śalya's valour
was a thorn in his flesh,
Bhīma wounded him
with a single arrow,
and with seven more
blocked his advance.

5 Rushing to the rescue
of Dharmaputra Yudhiṣṭhira,
Sātyaki shrouded the Madra-rājā
with a hundred arrows,
and broke into a lion-roar
of victory.

6 Nakula and Sahadeva,
with five arrows each,
wounded Śalya,
and with seven more
quickly prevented him
from advancing.

7 Attacked and harassed by all
those mahā-chariot-heroes,
readying a strong,
formidable bow
capable of neutralising
the fearful force of a foe,

8 Śalya, O respectworthy monarch,
targeted Śatyaki
with twentyfive arrows,
Bhīma with seventy,
and Nakula
with seven arrows.

9 Next, he shattered the bow
of the expert archer
Sahadeva
with a *bhalla*-arrow,
and wounded him
with twentyone arrows.

10 On that battlefield,
Sahadeva swiftly strung another bow,
and wounded
his supremely radiant
maternal uncle Śalya
with five arrows

11 That flashed like fire
and stung like venomous snakes.
Then,
with curved and knotted arrows
he targeted
Śalya's charioteer,

12 And blazing with anger,
with three of them
he wounded the charioteer.
Then Bhīma
with seventy arrows,
Sātyaki with nine,

13 And Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
with sixty,
assailed and wounded Śalya.
Mahārāja!
Pierced by those mahā-chariot-heroes,
Śalya,

14 Bathed in blood,
looked like a mountain
with red chalk-liquid
streaming down its slopes.
With five arrows for each
were those mahā-bowmen

15 Counter-attacked, O rājā,
and wounded by Śalya.
An incredible spectacle!
O respectworthy monarch!
With a second *bhalla*-arrow,
Dharmaputra Yudhiṣṭhira's

16 Bow and arrow were sliced
by the supreme
mahā-chariot-hero Śalya.
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
readied
another bow

17 And shrouded Śalya's horses, charioteer,
war-flag and chariot
with a volley of arrows.
Overwhelmed
on the field
by the arrows of Dharmaputra

18 Yudhiṣṭhira, Śalya nonetheless
frustrated Yudhiṣṭhira
with ten sharp arrows.
Seeing Dharmaputra Yudhiṣṭhira
blocked,
enraged Sātyaki

19 Released five arrows
at the heroic
ruler-of-Madra Śalya.
Slicing
with a razor-sharp arrow
the mahā-bow of Śatyaki,

20 Śalya further attacked Bhīma
and others
with three arrows each.
Mahārāja!
This so infuriated
truly valiant Sātyaki

21 That he hurled a gold-handled,
mahā-expensive *tomara*-javelin
at Śalya.
Bhīma shot
a fiery, snake-virulent
nārāca-arrow,

22 Nakula hurled a śakti-spear,
Sahadeva flung
a splendid-looking mace,
and Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
eager to kill Śalya,
shot a *śataghnī*-missile.

23 But the Madra-rājā Śalya,
with a variety
of counter-weapons,
frustrated all the weapons
that sped from the hands
of the five heroes.

24 Disintegrating
with his *bhalla*-arrows
the *tomara*-lance of Sātyaki
and the gold-filigreed arrow
of Bhīma,
Śalya,

25 Valiant and famed and ingenious
on the battlefield,
reduced both to smithereens.
Similarly,
the fearful gold-handled śakti-spear
hurled by Nakula,

26 And the mace flung by Sahadeva,
were pulverised
by the arrows of Śalya.
O Bharata descendant!
With two arrows he destroyed
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's *śataghni*-firearm,

27 Which the Pāṇḍava soldiers witnessed,
and then
he roared his leonine war-cries.
Unable to tolerate
this feat of his enemy,
Śini's grandson Sātyaki,

28 Roused to furious rage,
readied another bow,
and with two arrows wounded
the ruler of Madra,
and with three he assailed
Śalya's charioteer.

29 This so inflamed Śalya,
O rājā, that,
like an elephant-driver prodding
huge elephants with iron goads,
he injured
his foes with ten arrows.

30 So fierce was the assault
of the Madra-rājā Śalya
that the enemy-routing
mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas
were unable
to face its challenge.

31 When rājā Duryodhana saw
this wonderful feat of Śalya,
he was convinced
the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas and Sṛñjayas
would perish
on the battlefield.

32 This was the time,
O rājā,
when Bhīma,
determined to die if necessary,
once more launched an attack
on the Madra-ruler.

33 Nakula and Sahadeva also,
assisted
by the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki,
formed a ring around Śalya,
and deluged
him with arrows.

34 Singly, all by himself,
the Madra-rājā Śalya
continued to battle
with these four
Pāṇḍava mahā-bowmen
and mahā-chariot-heroes.

35 In the resulting mahā-carnage,
O rājā,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
with a razor-sharp arrow
killed
Śalya's wheel-protector.

36 Seeing his valiant
mahā-chariot-hero
wheel-protector slain,
the formidable rājā of Mudra
shrouded his foes
with a volley of arrows.

37 When he saw his soldiers
on the battlefield
deluged by those arrows,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
was perplexed,
and thought:

38 “How will the mahā-percipient words
of Mādhava-Krishna
prove to be true?
At this rate,
infuriated rājā Śalya
will wipe out my army.

39 I, my brothers,
the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki,
the Pāñcālas, the Sṛñjayas –
all of us together
are unable to defeat
the Madra-ruler.

40 It looks as if this mahā-powerful
maternal uncle of ours
will kill us today.
In that case,
what truth is there in the words
of Govinda-Krishna?”

41 O elder brother of Pāṇḍu!
The entire Pāṇḍava force
of chariots, elephants and cavalry
surrounded
the Madra-rājā
and attacked him from all sides.

42 Like the wind
scattering masses of clouds,
rājā Śalya,
with his miscellaneous weapons,
scattered the arrow-showers
of his advancing foes.

43 We saw with our own eyes
the deluge
of Śalya’s gold-feathered arrows
sweep through the sky
and settle on his foes
like a swarm of locusts.

44 Shot by the Madra-rājā
from the rear of the field,
those arrows
sped through the sky
like flocks
of *śalabha*-birds.

45 O lord of men!
Sped from the bow
of the rājā of Madra,
those gold-feathered arrows
choked the sky
with space-glutting density.

46 A thick arrow-darkness descended
on the battlefield
of mahā-carnage –
rendering invisible
all the Pāṇḍavas,
and all our soldiers.

47 Seeing the arrow-deluge
of the powerful
Madra-rājā Śalya
so swiftly agitate
and confound the ocean
of the Pāṇḍava army,

48 The gods, gandharvas
and Dānava anti-gods
were stunned with supreme wonder.
O respectworthy monarch!
Shrouding all those warriors
with arrows from all sides,

49 And shrouding
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira also,
Śalya screamed repeatedly
his lion-roar of victory.
The arrow-assailed Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes

50 Were blocked
by that single mahā-chariot-hero.
But Bhīma and the others,
led by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
stopped from advancing,
did not however retreat.

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 Elsewhere (continued Sañjaya)
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
and his band of brave Trigarta
mahā-chariot-heroes
assailed Arjuna
with a volley of iron arrows.

2 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna blocked
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman with three,
and the mahā-bowmen
with two arrows each.

3 O bull-brave Bharata!
With a fresh shower
of arrows,
mahārāja,
that stuck to their bodies
like long thorns,

4 Pārtha-Arjuna attacked again,
but failed
to dislodge them from their positions.
With Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman leading them,
their chariot-ranks
surrounded Arjuna

5 The mahā-chariot-hero,
and targeted him
on the field of battle.
With perfect accuracy,
O rājā,
their gold-filigreed arrows.

6 Fell in clusters
inside the main seating portion
of Arjuna's chariot.
The two bull-brave
finest of all mahā-bowmen
Krishna and Arjuna,

7 Oppressed by so many arrows,
was a sight that delighted
the brave-in-battle Kauravas.
O radiant lord!
The *kūbara*-poles, wheels, *īṣā*-shafts,
yoktra-halters of Arjuna's chariot,

8 Yokes and *anukarṣa*-lower portions
of Arjuna's chariot –
all were swamped with arrows.
O rājā!
Never was seen,
and never heard of –

9 The state to which Arjuna
was reduced
by your hosts of warriors.
Assailed from all sides
by these sharp
lovely-feathered arrows,

10 Arjuna's chariot was ablaze,
as it were,
struck by hundreds of meteors.
Then, mahārāja,
with a volley of curved and knotted arrows,
Arjuna

11 Drenched your warriors
like a torrential monsoon downpour
striking a mountain.
Pierced on the field
by countless arrows engraved
with Pārtha-Arjuna's name,

12 Your soldiers saw nothing
but images of Pārtha-Arjuna
everywhere.
A furious mahā-conflagration
of arrow-flames,
twanging bow the fanning wind, –

13 That was the Arjuna-fire
consuming the wood
of your army.
They fell on the ground,
one by one,
wheels and yokes,

14 Quivers, pennants, war-flags,
and chariots as well,
O Bharata descendant,
īṣā-shafts,
anukarṣa-lower portions,
triveṇu-wood-joints,

15 *Akṣa*-axles, *yoktra*-halters,
pratoda-hubs
ropes and whips,
heads of warriors
adorned with turbans
and earrings,

16 And also,
O mahā-fortune-favoured one,
arms and shoulders,
umbrellas and fans,
and heaps upon heaps
of crowns and diadems –

17 All, O descendant of Bharata,
falling in the wake
of Arjuna's careening chariot.
O lord of the world!
The progress of infuriated
Pārtha-Arjuna's chariot

[IX:14:18-23]

Transcreated by P. Lal

18 Was bogged down in a morass and filth.
of blood and marrow
Breeder of terror
in cowards
and enhancer of the joy
of the brave,

19 The battlefield became,
O Bharata descendant,
the funeral playing field
of Rudra-Śiva.
Destroying two hundred chariots,
foe-tormenting Pārtha-Arjuna

20 Appeared on the battlefield
like a resplendent
smokeless fire.
Like moving-and-unmoving-
life-consuming
Bhagavān Agni,

21 The smokeless destroyer of the world,
O rājā,
was Dhanañjaya-Pārtha-Arjuna.
Seeing that feat of Pāṇḍava Arjuna
on the field,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman

22 Drove up in a high-flying
war-flag chariot
to block the Pāṇḍava's advance.
Both were celebrated
as tigers-among-men,
both were unexcelled bowmen.

23 Determined to destroy
each other,
they clashed on the field.
A truly hideous deluge
of arrows,
O mahārāja,

24 Gushed from the bows of both,
like a monsoon downpour,
O bull-brave Bharata!
Shooting
curved and knotted arrows,
the two warriors clashed,

25 Like two bulls
goring each other
with sharp horns.
Mahārāja!
It was a prolonged,
evenly matched duel.

26 And then recommenced
a mutual barrage
of weapons and missiles.
With twelve specially sharpened,
gold-feathered arrows,
Arjuna,

27 O descendant of Bharata,
became Aśvatthāman's target,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna with ten.
Joyfully,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
readied his Gāṇḍīva bow,

28 After briefly paying respect
to his guru's son
on the field of battle.
Foe-exterminating
ambidexterous Arjuna immobilised
the horses, charioteer and chariot

29 Of Aśvatthāman,
and wounded him with arrows
fired with effortless ease.
Standing firm
in his horseless chariot,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman

30 Hurled at Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
a *musala*-club
that resembled
a *parigha*-spiked iron mace.
Eyeing that gold-ornamented club
speeding towards him,

31 Enemy-exterminating Pārtha-
Arjuna shattered it
into seven pieces.
Seeing it disintegrate,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
in a towering rage,

32 Lifted a *parigha*-mace
that looked like the peak
of a veritable Indra-among-hills.
Well-versed-in-war
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
hurled it at Pārtha-Arjuna.

33 Tracking that mace rushing at him
like inflamed Antaka-Kala
the god of death,
Pāṇḍava Arjuna
swiftly sliced it
with five excellent arrows.

34 O descendant of Bharata!
Sliced by Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows
in that mahā-clash,
the fragments of the mace fell,
and with them fell the hopes
of the enemy-rulers.

35 With three more *bhalla*-arrows,
Pāṇḍava Arjuna
wounded Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.
Grievously injured
by supremely mahā-ātmaned powerful
Pārtha-Arjuna,

36 Formidable Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
remained unperturbed.
Then, O rājā,
by the mahā-chariot-hero
Bhāradvāja-Aśvatthāman,
Suratha –

37 With all the Kṣatriyas there
as witnesses –
was shrouded by arrows.
And Suratha,
the mahā-chariot-hero
of the Pāñcālas,

38 Counter-attacked,
in his cloud-rumbling-chariot,
his foe Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.
Able-to-face-every-emergency,
drawing taut
his excellent, powerful bow,

39 Suratha shrouded Aśvatthāman
with a volley
of fearful, snake-venomous arrows.
Seeing the infuriated
mahā-chariot-hero Suratha
counter-attack,

40 Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman reacted
with the fury of a snake
hit with a cudgel.
Knitting his forehead
into three furrows,
and licking his lips,

41 And glaring malevolently
at Suratha,
smoothing his bowstring,
he released
a sharp *nārāca*-arrow
as deadly as the rod of Yama.

42 Like Śakra-Indra's thunderbolt
piercing right through the earth,
the *nārāca*-shaft
sliced through Suratha's chest,
and lodged
in his heart.

43 Pierced by that *nārāca*-arrow,
Suratha
toppled and thudded
on the battlefield
like a mountain peak
shattered by lightning.

44 No sooner had that hero
toppled
than Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
rushed forward
and climbed into the chariot
of Suratha.

45 Then, mahārāja, Aśvatthāman,
fully equipped
with war-weapons,
and ringed by Saṁśaptakas,
made Arjuna
his next target.

46 It was around noon then,
and the mahā-grisly clash
with Arjuna progressed,
adding considerably
to the population
of Yama's kingdom.

47 We admired the valour
of the Kaurava warriors,
but we were wonderstruck
by the spectacle of Arjuna,
singly,
taking on so many heroes.

48 It was like in the ancient past
when Śatakratu-Indra
took on the Daitya mahā-antigods;
similarly,
Arjuna in this battle
was one against many.

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya)
On one side, Duryodhana
and Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
were locked
in a mahā-clash
with arrows and śakti-spears.

2 Hundreds of streams of arrows
in that war, mahārāja,
fell like torrents of rain
in the monsoon.

3 Assailing with five swift arrows
the formidable Droṇa-slayer
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
rājā Duryodhana
with five more
wounded him severely.

4 Renowned for his valiant strength,
muscular Dhṛṣṭadyumna
retaliated with a volley
of seventy arrows
which wounded and restricted
Duryodhana's attack.

5 O bull-brave Bharata!
Seeing rājā Duryodhana
in trouble,
his brothers
with a huge army
surrounded Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

6 Frustrating all their attempts
to encircle him,
showing his consummate skill
in weapons, O rājā,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna roamed freely
all over the field.

7 Elsewhere on the field,
Śikhaṇḍin
with the help of the Prabhadrakas
attacked the two brilliant bowmen:
mahā-chariot-hero Gautama-Kṛpa
and Kṛtavarman.

8 O lord of the world!
The horrendous war continued,
a mahā-carnage of warriors
committed
to staking their lives
in a bloody dice-game.

9 In one part,
showering all the directions
with his volleys of arrows,
Śalya pressed
against Sātyaki and the Pāṇḍavas,
including wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

10 O Indra-among-rājās!
With his valour and his weapons
he battled
against Nakula and Sahadeva,
each of whom
was like Yama himself.

11 In that field of mahā-massacre,
there was none assisting Śalya
as he continued
to oppress
with his arrows
the mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas.

12 Seeing Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
sorely afflicted
by Śalya,
the delight-of-his-mother Nakula
launched a surprise attack
on his maternal uncle.

13 Slayer-of-heroic-enemies Nakula
released
an obscuring swarm of arrows
upon Śalya, and,
smiling, targeted his chest
with ten arrows.

14 Iron arrows
Hand-polished
Gold-feathered
Stone-sharpened
Fired from a special
bow-like contraption.

15 Śalya retaliated
by seriously wounding
his mahā-ātmaned nephew
with a volley
of curved
and knotted arrows.

16 Then rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma, Śatyaki,
and Mādrī's son Sahadeva
combined to launch
a joint attack
against the Madra-rājā Śalya.

17 The reverberating rattle
of their chariots
swept through
the directions
and sub-directions,
and made the earth tremble.

18 But the foe-conquering general
Śalya
successfully blocked their advance.
Wounding Yudhiṣṭhira
with three arrows,
Bhīma with five,

19 Sātyaki with a hundred,
and Sahadeva
with three arrows, –
mahā-ātmaned Nakula's bow
with arrow
still fitted in it,

20 O respectworthy monarch,
the Madra-rājā Śalya
splintered it
with a razor-sharp arrow.
The shattered fragments
fell on the field.

21 Quickly readying another bow,
the mahā-chariot-hero son of Mādri,
Nakula
showered the chariot
of the rājā of Madra
with a volley of arrows.

22 O respectworthy monarch!
Simultaneously,
with ten arrows each,
Yudhiṣṭhira and Sahadeva
targeted the chest
of the ruler of Madra.

23 Then Bhīma rushed in
with sixty arrows,
and Sātyaki with ten
kaṅka-feathered shafts
closed in
on the rājā of Madra.

24 The Madra-rājā replied
in a burst of rage,
targeting Sātyaki first
with nine curved
and knotted arrows,
followed by seventy others.

25 O respectworthy monarch!
Next, Śalya sliced Sātyaki's bow
at the handle,
with arrow still fixed in it,
and slaughtered
his four chariot-horses.

26 After making him chariot-less,
the rājā of Madra,
Śalya the mahā-chariot-hero
surrounded Sātyaki
with volleys of arrows
on all sides.

27 O Kaurava monarch!
In addition,
with a volley of ten arrows
he afflicted the enraged sons of Mādrī,
Yudhiṣṭhira,
and Pāṇḍava Bhīma.

28 We were all witnesses
to the unbelievable valour
of the rājā of Madra,
who could not be defeated
by the combined strength
of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons.

29 Truly valiant-in-war Śātyaki
mounted another chariot
and,
seeing the Pāṇḍavas wilting
under the onslaught
of the rājā of Madra,

30 He swiftly launched on attack
on Śalya.
Śalya saw him advancing
in his chariot,
and pushed forward
to confront him –

31 Exactly like one musth elephant
charging
against another musth elephant.
What a darshan
we had of that
tumultuous clash

32 Between Sātyaki
and the ruler of Madra!
It resembled the battle
in the past
between Śambara and Indra,
the rājā of the deathless gods.

33 Seeing the rājā of Madra
halting in front of him
on the battlefield,
Sātyaki shot five arrows,
and shouted:
"Stop! Stop!"

34 The response of the severely wounded
rājā of Madra
was to wound
mahā-ātmaned Sātyaki
with a volley of sharp,
colourful-feathered arrows.

35 Then the mahā-expert bowmen,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
seeing their maternal uncle
in combat with Sātyaki,
drove their chariots in a body
and attacked him.

36 What followed next
was sheer carnage.
Total tumult.
Lion-roaring war-cries.
Blood flowing like water
on the field of battle.

37 All those warriors
on the battlefield,
mahārāja –
they roared and squabbled
like famished lions
over a mess of meat.

38 The field of battle
was blanketed
with heaps of arrows;
the sky became
a colossal storehouse
of arrows.

39 All those arrows
of the mahātmā heroes
created pitch darkness
in all directions,
like clouds
obscuring all things.

40 O rājā!
The glittering gold-winged arrows
lit up the horizon;
they looked
like snakes
with freshly sloughed-off skin.

41 What a wonderful display of valour
was provided
by slayer-of-foes Śalya
when singlehanded
he battled against
a horde of heroes!

42 The entire earth was enveloped
by the voleys
upon volleys
of *kaṅka*-feathered
and peacock-feathered arrows
shot by his powerful arms.

43 O rājā!
We saw the chariot of Śalya
roaming free
on the field of battle
exactly like the chariot
of Śakra-Indra
in the distant past
when he battled
and defeated the anti-gods.

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 O radiant one! (continued Sañjaya)
Led by the Madra-rājā! Śalya,
your soldiers once again
attacked the Pāṇḍava ranks.

2 Assailed and worsted,
your battle-roused soldiers, superior in numbers,
organised themselves
and succeeded in unnerving the Pāṇḍavas.

3 Caught offguard by the assault
of the Kauravas,
in the very presence
of Krishna and Arjuna,
and despite Bhīma's commands,
the Pāṇḍava ranks retreated.

4 Roused to flaming anger,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna shrouded
Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman
and their allies
with volley upon volley
of arrows.

5 Sahadeva shrouded Śakuni
and his followers
with arrows.
Nakula, who was at his side,
kept the Madra-rājā
within his sight.

6 Draupadī's sons confronted
many Indra-like kings,
and blocked them.
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
was similarly blocked
by the Pāñcāla princes.

7 Brandishing his mace,
Bhīma blocked rājā Duryodhana
and Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
blocked Śalya
at the head
of a large army.

8 And so, on the battlefield
took place
many skirmishes and combats
between warriors
determined never to turn
their backs in battle.

9 The utterly astonishing feat
that I witnessed
on the battlefield
was Śalya singlehanded
confronting the entire army
of the Pāṇḍavas.

10 Like Śanaiścara-Saturn
alongside Candra-Moon –
that was how
Śalya looked
on the battlefield
confronting Yudhiṣṭhira.

11 Assailing rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
with snake-venomed arrows,
he rushed forward
and shrouded Bhīma
with a deluge
of torrential shafts.

12 The warriors of both armies
witnessed
the wonder-working-weapons-valour
and dexterity of Śalya,
and showered on him
their pūjā-respect.

13 Devastated by the attack
of Śalya,
the soldiers
disobeyed the order of Yudhiṣṭhira
to fight,
and fled the field.

14 Seeing the Pāṇḍava ranks
getting decimated
by the Madra-rājā,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was consumed
by a violent anger.

15 Summoning all his reserve
of masculine energy,
he defied the Madra-rājā.
His mind was made up –
he would win today,
or die on the field.

16 Addressing his brothers, Krishna,
and Sātyaki of the Mādhavas,
he said:
"Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
Karṇa,
and other lords of the earth

17 Who fought for the cause
of the Kauravas
have all perished fighting.
You have shown valour
worthy of you
on the battlefield.

18 Only my share of valour remains:
the mahā-chariot-hero
Śalya himself.
Today I will defeat
the ruler of Madra
on the battlefield.

19 Let me explain to you
the plan I have.
Protecting my chariot-wheels
will be
the valiant twin sons
of Mādravatī,

20 Who are respected by heroes
and are as invincible
as Vāsava-Indra himself.
Honouring Kṣatriya-dharma,
and respecting their maternal uncle
on the battlefield –

21 Let firm-in-truth
Nakula and Sahadeva
confront him nonetheless for my sake.
Either Śalya dies,
or I die in the clash.
May you all prosper!

22 O world-famed heroes!
Listen to my promise!
I say this truly!
O lords of the earth!
My Kṣatriya-dharma dictates
that I fight Śalya,

23 Our maternal uncle, today –
either I win,
or I die in the attempt.
So let weapons
of all kinds
and in copious quantities

24 Be loaded in my chariot
quickly and systematically
by the chariot-attendants.
Śini's grandson Śatyaki
will protect my right wheel,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna my left,

25 Dhanañjaya-Pārtha-Arjuna
my rear,
and Bhīma,
who is the finest-of-wielders
of war-weapons,
will guard my front.

26 This strategy will make me
far superior to Śalya
in this mahā-battle."
Always eager to please
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
they did as asked.

27 A surge of joyous enthusiasm
swept through the ranks
of the Pāṇḍavas,
specially the Pāñcālas,
the Somakas
and the Matsyas.

28 Honouring his vow,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira attacked
the ruler of Madra.
Conches, *bheri*-drums,
and hundreds upon hundreds
of musical instruments

29 Of the Pāñcālas sounded,
and the soldiers burst
into lion-roars of victory.
Flushed with hope,
swiftly they attacked
the rājā of Madra –

30 All those bull-brave heroes
of the Kaurava dynasty,
shouting their joyous war-cries.
The tinkling of elephant bells,
the ululation
of blaring conches,

31 The scream of *turya*-trūmpets
created a mahā-cacophony
that made the earth shudder.
Your son Duryodhana
and valiant Śalya
stood firm,

32 Like a sunrise mountain
and a sunset mountain
unaffected by torrential downpours.
War-valour-vainglorious Śalya
drenched
foe-destroying Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

33 With a deluge of arrows,
like Śambara
attacking Maghavat-Indra.
And the Kaurava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
also,
with his beautiful bow,

34 Mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira,
implementing
the instructions of Droṇa,
swiftly and exquisitely discharged
a shower of arrows
on his enemy.

35 None could find any fault
with Yudhiṣṭhira,
on the field of battle.
As they oppressed each other
with vivid displays
of arrow-skill,

36 The two combatants
were like two lions
fighting over a chunk of meat.
Bhīma was locked
in battle
with your son Duryodhana;

37 And the Pāñcāla Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Sātyaki,
and Mādrī and Pāṇḍu's twin sons
Nakula and Sahadeva
confronted Śakuni
and other heroes.

38 O rājā! What followed
was a tumultuous clash
between both ranks,
each hoping to win –
a clash caused
by your devious policy.

39 With a curved
and knotted arrow,
Duryodhana sliced
the gold-filigreed flag
of Bhīma,
after announcing his intention.

40 That lovely-looking war-flag
of Bhīma,
with all its rows of bells,
shredded by the arrow,
fell in little pieces
on the field.

41 With a razor-sharp arrow,
lord-of-men Duryodhana
shattered
Bhīma's wonderful bow
which resembled
an elephant's trunk.

42 His bow splintered,
formidable Bhīma attacked
your son
with a chariot-śakti-lance,
which made Duryodhana slump down
dazed in his chariot.

43 Seeing him half-senseless,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
cut off
the head
of Duryodhana's charioteer
with a razor-arrow.

44 O Bharata descendant!
O rājā!
Charioteer killed,
the horses ran wild.
Shouts of "Hai! Hai!"
rose from all sides.

45 Then, the mahā-chariot-hero.
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
rushed to rescue Duryodhana.
To protect your son,
Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman also
sped forward.

46 Such was the commotion
that fear gripped
the followers of Duryodhana.
Taking advantage of this,
Arjuna employed his Gāṇḍīva bow
and killed them all.

47 In a towering rage,
Yudhiṣṭhira personally
took over the reins
of the teeth-white, mind swift horses
and attacked
the ruler of Madra.

48 We noticed an astonishing change
in Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
Normally
mild and gentle,
he was transformed
into a virulent warrior.

49 Shaking with rage
and rolling his eyes,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
killed thousands
of his enemies
with sharp arrows.

50 O rājā! Before the onslaught
of the arrows
of the eldest Pāṇḍava,
the soldiers collapsed
one by one
like thunder-toppled peaks.

51 Like a strong wind scattering clouds,
singly,
powerful Yudhiṣṭhira scattered
horses, charioteers, war-flags
and chariot-heroes
as if he was playing a game with them.

52 Like Rudra-Śiva in a fury
destroying creatures,
enraged Yudhiṣṭhira sliced
horses, horse-riders
and foot-soldiers
into hundreds of pieces.

53 Emptying the battlefield
of all soldiers
with his volleys of arrows,
Yudhiṣṭhira shouted
to the ruler of Madra,
"Wait, Śalya! Wait!"

54 Terror numbed all your soldiers
who witnessed this feat
of dreadful-deed-doer Yudhiṣṭhira,
but Śalya
remained unruffled
and attacked Yudhiṣṭhira.

55 Blazing with anger
and blowing their conches,
the two adversaries
continued shouting
and challenging each other
on the battlefield.

56 Śalya oppressed
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
with a deluge of arrows,
and Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira retaliated
with an obscuring volley
of arrows.

57 O rājā! Blood streamed
from the bodies
of the rājā of Madra
and Yudhiṣṭhira
from wounds inflicted
by *kaṅka*-feathered arrows.

58 Like two flowering *kiṁśuka*-
flames-of-the-forest in spring
were these two
formidable, radiant mahātmās
who had staked
their very lives –

59 So spectacular that no warrior
on the battlefield
could tell who would win.
"Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira
will kill the Madra-ruler
and enjoy this earth."

60 "Śalya will kill Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
and give the kingdom
to Duryodhana."
Impossible to tell
which of these predictions
would come true.

61 Everything in the battle
was turning out right
for Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
Then Śalya
pinned down Yudhiṣṭhira
with a hundred arrows,

62 And with another volley
of sharp arrows
disintegrated his bow.
Wielding another bow,
Yudhiṣṭhira targeted Śalya
with three hundred arrows,

63 And with a razor-sharp arrow,
sliced
his bow in two. Then,
with curved and knotted arrows,
he killed
Śalya's horses.

64 With two super-sharp arrows
he eliminated
Śalya's two chariot-wheel protectors.
Next,
with a dazzlingly lustrous
sharp arrow –

65 A *bhalla*-shaft – he shredded
the war-flag of Śalya.
That was when,
O foe-chastising monarch,
the army of Duryodhana
fled.

66 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
saw the perilous state
of the Madra-ruler,
rushed, picked him up in his chariot,
and drove away
from the battle-field.

67 Yudhiṣṭhira pursued them briefly,
roaring his war-cry.
The-ruler-of-Madra Śalya
smiled,
and climbed into another
well-equipped chariot –

68 A chariot that rattled
like the rumbling
of mahā-rain-clouds,
excellently furnished
with weapons and gadgets,
and designed to horripilate its enemies.

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 It was the valiant Madra-ruler
(continued Sañjaya)
who armed himself
with a new bow,
wounded Yudhiṣṭhira,
and roared like a lion.

2 Finest-of-bull-brave-Kṣatriyas,
a warrior of illimitable energy,
Śalya
was a Parjanya rain-cloud
drenching his enemies
with torrents of arrows.

3 Picking on Yudhiṣṭhira,
he also targeted Sātyaki with ten,
Bhīma with three,
and Sahadeva too with three arrows.

4 Like hunters terrorising elephants
with flaming torches,
he harassed with his arrows
other mahā-bowmen,
targeting their horses,
chariots and chariot-poles.

5 Finest-of-chariot-warriors Śalya
spread fatal havoc
among elephants
and elephant-riders,
horses and horse-riders,
chariots and chariot-heroes.

6 He sliced weapon-brandishing
arms of warriors,
shredded war-flags, and spread
corpses on the battlefield
like *kuśa*-grass
on a *vedī*-altar.

7 But even as he slaughtered
enemy warriors
like Death, like Antaka-Kāla,
anger-inflamed
Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas and Somakas
surrounded Śalya.

8 Bhīma, Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
Mādrī's heroic twin sons,
seeing formidable Śalya
pitted against hugely brave rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
challenged him
to fight them.

9 O Indra-among-men!
Successfully restraining
lord-of-men Śalya,
finest of vivid-in-valour warriors,
they assailed him
with super-swift feathered arrows.

10 Safely protected
by Bhīma,
Nakula and Sahadeva,
and Mādhava-Sātyaki,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the son of Dharma,
targeted the chest
of Madra's ruler Śalya
with swift feathered arrows.

11 Ordered by Duryodhana,
when he saw the arrows
successfully obstructing
the ruler of Madra,
your finest chariot-heroes,
armed to the teeth
with every war-weapon,
in a pincer manoeuvre
surrounded Yudhiṣṭhira.

12 O rājā! Swiftly
the ruler of Madra
targeted Yudhiṣṭhira.
with seven arrows.
In the tumult and chaos
of that fearful battle,
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
fired nine arrows
and wounded Śalya.

13 Both mahā-chariot-heroes –
the ruler of Madra
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira –
pulled the strings of their bows
till they touched their ears,
and with oil-polished arrows
they targeted
and shrouded each other
on the field of battle.

14 Both mahā-chariot-heroes
seized every chance
to attack the other.
Both near-invincible,
both mahā-powerful,
both incomparable kings,
both shooting arrows
calculated to grievously
wound the other.

15 As they rained arrows
upon each other,
the twang of the bowstring
of Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
and the twang of the bowstring
of mahā-ātmaned Śalya
were as deafening
as the dreadful thunderbolt
of Mahendra-Indra.

16 Proud, both of them,
they fought each other
like two baby tigers
in a mahā-forest
for a chunk of meat,
or like two elephants
with massive tusks
colliding and injuring
each other.

17 Soon, the mahātmā
ruler of Madra
selected an arrow
resplendent like the sun
and like blazing fire
and struck the fearfully
powerful and agile
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
in his chest.

18 O rājā! Though wounded grievously,
the bull-brave hero
of the Kaurava dynasty,
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
replied with an arrow
perfectly aimed
that wounded the ruler of Madra,
to the great delight
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

19 In a matter of moments,
the Indra-like ruler of Madra,
rendered senseless,
regained consciousness.
His eyes red
with passionate anger,
he targeted Yudhiṣṭhira,
son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
with a hundred arrows.

20 This so infuriated
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
son of Dharma,
he swiftly retaliated
with nine arrows that struck
the chest of Śalya
through his gold armour.
After this, Yudhiṣṭhira
shot six more arrows.

21

Pulling taut the bowstring
of his marvellous bow,
the ruler of Madra
replied with a volley
of countless arrows.
With two more arrows
he sliced the bow
of the bull-brave Kaurava
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira

22

Then the mahātmā
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
fitting a new
and fearful bow,
targeted Śalya
with very sharp arrows,
like Mahendra-Indra
targeted Namuci
in the distant past.

23

With nine arrows
mahātmā Śalya
sliced the gold armours
of both Bhīma
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
Having done this,
he targeted and wounded
the arms of both
his Pāṇḍava enemies.

24

With a razor-sharp arrow
that flamed like the sun
and dazzled like fire,
he shredded the bow
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
With six arrows
Kṛpa cut down his charioteer
who toppled in front
of Yudhiṣṭhira chariot.

25 With four more arrows
the ruler of Madra
killed the four horses
of Yudhiṣṭhira's chariot.
The horses slaughtered,
mahātmā Śalya
embarked on a plan
to eliminate the soldiers
of Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

26 The wonderful feat
that no one could ever
accomplish in battle –
was accomplished by Śalya
against Yudhiṣṭhira.
Yudhiṣṭhira the hero
with the *mṛdaṅga*-symbolled war-flag,
deeply distressed,
thought:

27 'Has fate so decided
that the words of Krishna,
Indra's younger brother,
will prove to be untrue?
He did tell me,
"You will kill Śalya."
how can Lokanātha-Krishna,
the Lord of the world,
ever be wrong?'

28 Seeing the terrible plight
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
at the hands
of the ruler of Madra, Śalya,
mahātmā Bhīma
sliced Śalya's bow
with a super-swift arrow,
and with two more wounded
that Indra-among-men.

[IX:17:29-32]

Transcreated by P. Lal

29 In an absolute
fury of anger,
with two more arrows
Bhīma beheaded
the charioteer
of Śalya,
after which
he quickly
killed all four horses.

30 Finest-of-bow-wielders Bhīma,
and the son of Mādrī,
Sahadeva,
with repeated volleys
of hundreds of arrows,
targeted Śalya,
who, a lone warrior,
was roaming the battlefield
wherever it pleased him.

31 Seeing Śalya confused
by those volleys of arrows,
Bhīma swiftly sliced
the armour of Śalya.
His armour destroyed
by Bhīma's arrows,
the ruler of Madra,
whose shield was adorned
with a thousand stars,

32 Mahātmā Śalya,
brandishing a sword,
leapt from his chariot
and began running towards
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
He severed the shaft
of Nakula's chariot,
and continued to race
towards Yudhiṣṭhira.

33 Even as rājā Śalya,
like Antaka-Yama himself,
sprinted towards Yudhiṣṭhira,
in swift, long leaps,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the five sons of Draupadī,
Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
and Śikhaṇḍin
manoeuvred to encircle him.

34 With nine arrows
Bhīma reduced to smithereens
his incomparable shield.
Roaring with delight
in front of your soldiers,
he shot a stream
of *bhalla*-arrows
and sliced the sword
brandished by Śalya.

35 Despite the fact
that he was assailed
by brilliant Pāṇḍava warriors
headed by Bhīma,
the rājā of Madra
raced to attack
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
with the speed of a lion
pursuing a deer.

36 Deprived of his horses
and his charioteer,
Yudhiṣṭhira blazed
like an irate fire.
The sight of the rājā of Madra
inflamed him,
and he resolved
to attack his enemy
in full force.

37 Witnessing the marvellous feat
of Bhīma,
the Pāṇḍava ranks
were delighted
and praised his achievement
by laughing
and roaring their war-cries
and blowing victory peals
on their moon-white conches.

38 Such was the fearful noise
that arose
from that celebration
that the invincible
Kaurava warriors,
stunned semi-senseless
by the reverberation,
and bathed in blood,
fled helter-skelter.

39 Recalling the words
of Govinda-Krishna,
Yudhiṣṭhira determined
to eliminate Śalya.
He had lost his charioteer,
he had lost his horses,
so Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
stood in his chariot
holding a śakti-spear.

40 Keeping well in mind
the magnificent feat
of mahā-ātmaned Śalya,
and aware that Śalya
was allotted as his share,
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
decided to follow
the advice of Indra's
younger brother Krishna.

41 Its handle was golden.
It was studded with gems.
It dazzled like gold.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
picked up that śakti.
Boiling with anger,
with wide-open eyes
he stared balefully
at the Madra-rājā.

42 Incredible, O rājā!
Utterly incredible,
O god-among-men!
That the rājā of Madra,
stared at in that manner
by the pure-atmaned,
impecably moral
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
was not reduced to ashes.

43 Pride-of-the-Kauravas
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
readied that
lovely-and-fearsome-handled,
dazzling gem-encrusted
śakti-spear,
one of a kind,
and hurled it straight
at the Madrā-rājā.

44 The fiery śakti-spear,
flung vehemently,
sped through the air
scattering sparks,
witnessed by the Kauravas
on the battlefield,
to whom it appeared
like a mahā-meteor
at the end of a yuga.

45 Like the doomsday night
of Kāla armed with his noose,
as fearful to look at
as Yama's own mother,
as inescapable
as the rod of Brahmā . . .
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
hurled that śakti
with extreme accuracy.

46 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
revered that śakti
with perfumes and garlands
and the finest of seats
and foods and drinks.
Flaming like the doomsday
Saṁvartaka-fire it was,
as grisly as a ritual
of Aṅgiras' Atharvan.

47 It was fashioned by Tvaṣṭā
the divine artificer
for Īśāna-Śiva;
it consumed the life-breaths
and bodies of enemies;
it had the power
to pulverise all life
on earth and in sky and water
and everything else.

48 Bells on it tinkled,
pennants on it fluttered,
gems on it glittered,
lapis lazuli Tvaṣṭā gleamed.
Golden its handle,
infinite the care
with which Tvaṣṭā fashioned
this undefeatable destroyer
of all who hate Brahmā.

49 Intense dedication
inspired the super-speed
of thi śakti.
Charging it with mantras
to ensure the death
of the ruler of Madra,
and selecting the smoothest path
for its flight,
Yudhiṣṭhira hurled it.

50 "Die, scoundrel!"
roared Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
as, dancing in anger,
with his handsome arm
he flung the śakti,
like Rudra-Śiva
in the ancient past
shooting his arrow
to exterminate Andhaka.

51 Like Maheśvara-Śiva
when he destroyed Tripura
in the distant past
was Dharmātma Yudhiṣṭhira
engaged in his mission
of eliminating Śalya.
He looked as resplendent
as a maṇḍala-circle
of radiating light.

52 Like the god Agni leaping
from the ritual fire
to receive the ghee-offering,
Śalya roared and extended
his arm to catch
the śakti-spear,
impossible to repulse,
hurled with such force
by valiant Yudhiṣṭhira.

[IX:17:53-57]

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53 But that śakti-spear
cut through his vital energy,
pierced the chest of Śalya,
and, fluently,
like the flow of water,
entered the earth,
taking with it,
forever, the world-wide
fame of Śalya.

54 And Śalya, with blood oozing
from his nose,
eyes, ears and mouth –
he looked on the field
like the mahā-mountain Krauñca
with red chalk
streaming down its slopes
when struck by the might
of Skanda-Kārtikeya.

55 O delight of the Kauravas!
Shorn of his armour, by Bhīma,
mahātmā Śalya,
massive as the Airāvata
elephant of Mahendra-Indra,
tottered and toppled
from his chariot
like a mountain peak
shattered by a thunderbolt.

56 The rājā of Madra,
both arms outstretched,
fell in front
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
like a tall flag pole
of Indra.

57 All his limbs mutilated,
he was bleeding profusely.
And the earth
lovingly clasped
that bull-brave hero
to herself,

58 Like a lovelorn girl
embracing her lover
to her breasts.
Long did he lie there,
passionately enjoying
the earth,

59 Covering her
with all his limbs,
sleeping with her peacefully.
Slain by Dharma's son
Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
in that war of dharma,

60 Śalya lay there,
finally at peace,
like a ghee-gratified *sviṣṭa*-ritual fire.
His chest ripped apart
by the śakti,
his weapons and war-flag destroyed,

61 The Madra-rājā lay there,
savouring peace forever;
the goddess of glory Lakṣmī
never left him.
With another bow
as wondrous as Indra's bow, Yudhiṣṭhira,

62 Like the snake-eating
rājā-of-birds Garuḍa,
began a systematic slaughter
of his enemies
with volleys
of sharp *bhalla*-arrows.

63 Persecuted by the arrows
of Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
your soldiers
shut their eyes,
and started blindly
slashing at each other,

64

Unmindful not only
of their weapons,
but even of their lives,
as they bled to death.
With Madra-rājā Śalya dead,
his younger brother,

65

Just a youth,
mounted his chariot;
as talented as Śalya,
he confronted Yudhiṣṭhira.
With countless *nārāca*-arrows,
that finest-of-men,

66

A formidable warrior,
fired by revenge,
succeeded in wounding Yudhiṣṭhira.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
retaliated
with six arrows,

67

And with two razor-sharp arrows,
he shredded
his foe's bow and war-flag.
Then, with a dazzling,
super-sharp
and adamantine

68

Bhalla-arrow,
he severed the head
of his facing foe.
The sliced
ear-ringed head
fell on the field

69

Like a good man falling
from heaven,
after the rewards of his good deeds
are exhausted.
The bloodied headless body also
slid down the chariot.

70 When they saw this,
your soldiers panicked and fled.
Beautiful
was the armour
of the younger brother
of the king of Madra.

71 When he fell,
the Kauravas cried "Hai! Hai!",
broke ranks, and scattered.
Seeing Śalya's younger brother
cut down,
fearing for their lives

72 At the hands of the Pāṇḍavas,
your soldiers,
covered with the dust of battle,
fled. O bull-brave Bharata!
The panic-stricken
Kaurava soldiers

73 Were pursued
by Śini's grandson Sātyaki
with showers of arrows.
The chase
of the formidable and unrepulsable
mahā-bowman

74 Sātyaki was stopped abruptly
by the fearless intervention
of Kṛtavarman.
The mahā-ātmaned,
splendid-horse-charioted
Vṛṣṇi hero

75 Sātyaki, and Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman,
clashed
like two violent lions.
The two warriors
shrouded each other
with shining arrows

76 That sped with the splendour
 of sunrays.
The arrows of those
 two lion-like Vṛṣṇis
coursed
 through the sky

77 Like swarms
 of swift-flying insects.
Wounding Sātyaki
 with ten arrows,
and his horses
 with three,

78 Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman
 sliced his bow
with a single curved and knotted arrow.
 Flinging aside
that shattered excellent bow,
 the bull-brave Śini-

79 Grandson Sātyaki in no time
 fitted another
even more excellently swift.
 Stringing that bow,
the finest of the finest
 wielders of the bow

80 With ten arrows wounded
 Hardikya-Kṛtavarman
severely in the chest.
 Shattering
with accurate *bhalla*-arrows
 the chariot and its yuga-poles,

81 He killed the horses
 and both side-protectors of the chariot.
Prabhu! Lord!
 Seeing Kṛtavarman
unchariotied,
 Śaradvat's son Kṛpa

82 Bravely drove up,
and sped far away
with Kṛtavarman safe in his chariot.
O rājā!
With the Madra-rājā slain,
and Kṛtavarman unchurioted,

83 The army of Duryodhana
again broke ranks
and fled the field.
So thick was the dust on the field,
our enemies
did not notice this.

84 The major part of the army
in any case
had been decimated.
Soon enough,
they saw the thick dust
on the field

85 Coagulate with blood
and settle on the ground.
O bull-brave Bharata!
It was then
that Duryodhana realised
his army had panicked,

86 And all by himself
he resisted
the advance of the Pāṇḍavas,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons.
Targeting the charioted Pāṇḍavas,
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

87 And the formidable Ānartas,
he blocked their advance
with volleys of sharp arrows.
Like mortal man
unable to prevent
the arrival of death,

88 Duryodhana's enemies
were helpless before him.
Meanwhile, Kṛtavarman returned
in a new chariot.
Swiftly, mahā-chariot-hero
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira

89 With four arrows killed
all four horses
of Kṛtavarman,
and wounded Kṛpa
with six sharp
bhalla-arrows.

90 Aśvatthāman drove up
in his chariot
when he saw Kṛtavarman's
four horses killed,
and sped Kṛtavarman far away
from rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

91 Śaradvat's son Kṛpa
restrained Yudhiṣṭhira
with six arrows,
and with eight sharp ones
he wounded
Yudhiṣṭhira's horses.

92 O rājā! O mahārāja!
O bull-brave Bharata!
Your and your son's devious policy
led to this on-and-off battle.

93 When the bull-brave
Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira
killed the brilliant-in-bowcraft
Śalya,
Pṛtha-Kuntī's sons exulted
and blew their conches
to celebrate Śalya's death.

94 Like the gods exulting
when Indra killed Vṛtra
in the distant past,
the Pāṇḍavas glorified Yudhiṣṭhira
on the battlefield;
the earth reverberated
with their noisy homage.

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 After Śalya's death (continued Sañjaya)
seven hundred chariot-heroes
of the Madra-rājā left the main army
and struck out on their own.

2 Atop a hill-huge elephant,
and shaded by an umbrella,
fanned by white chowrie whisks,
Duryodhana arrived there,

3 And ordered them, shouting,
"Stop! Stop!"
Stop right now!"
Despite the repeated warnings
of Duryodhana,
the valiant Madra warriors,

4 Obsessed with the desire
of killing Yudhiṣṭhira,
entered the Pāṇḍava ranks.
Those brave heroes, mahārāja,
had resolved
to fight to the finish.

5 And twanging their bows loudly,
they penetrated
the Pāṇḍava army.
That Śalya was dead,
and Dharmaputra Yudhiṣṭhira
was being assailed

[IX:18:6-11]

Transcreated by P. Lal

6 By the mahā-chariot-hero
Madra-warriors
who deeply loved the Madra-rājā –
when Pārtha-Arjuna heard this,
the twanged
his Gāṇḍīva-bow

7 So fiercely that all the ten directions
reverberated,
and mahā-chariot-hero Arjuna
faced the warriors.
Arjuna, Bhīma, Madrī's sons
the twin Pāṇḍavas,

8 Tiger-among-men Sātyaki,
all five sons of Draupadī,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Śikhaṇḍin,
the Pāñcālas,
and the Somakas –

9 All of them surrounded
Yudhiṣṭhira in order
to protect him.
Having encircled him,
those bull-brave
Pāṇḍava heroes

10 Sliced through the ranks
of their enemies
like *makara*-monsters agitating
an ocean,
like a mahā-storm felling trees
in a forest.

11 Like the mahā-river Gaṅgā,
O rājā,
lashed by the west wind,
the Pāṇḍavas bore
the brunt of a counter-offensive
by the Madras.

12 Unsettling the massive force
of the mahā-ātmaned
Pāṇḍava mahā-chariot-heroes,
the Madra-warriors
shouted again and again:
"Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira –

13 Where is he? His brave brothers –
where are they?
Nowhere to be seen! Why?
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Śaini-Sātyaki,
all the sons of Draupadī –

14 The mahā-valiant Pāñcālas,
and Śikhaṇḍin
the mahā-chariot-hero –
where are they?"
Draupadī's mahā-chariot-heroes
were targeted by these warriors

15 Loyal to the Madra-rāja,
along with
Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki.
Many warriors lay there
with shattered chariot-wheels
and shredded war-flags,

16 Victims of the attacks
of their enemies.
O rājā!
They saw they were surrounded
by the Pāṇḍavas
with no hope of escape,

17 But despite your son's warning,
O Bharata descendant,
they continued to fight.
Duryodhana did all he could
to caution
those heroes

18 But not even a single
mahā-chariot-hero
listened to him.
Then the son
of the rājā of Gāndhāra,
Śakuni,

19 Who was skilled in speech,
mahārāja,
said to Duryodhana:
"Why are these Madra warriors
getting slaughtered
in front of our eyes?

20 With you still with us,
O Bharata descendant,
why should this happen?
Did we not vow
that we would all fight
united?

21 How can you bear to see
the annihilation
of your own men, O king?"
Duryodhana replied:
"I ordered them not to.
They did not listen.

22 They entered the Pāṇḍava ranks,
and almost all
have been wiped out."
Śakuni said:
"Hot-headed soldiers
don't always obey their leaders.

23 What is the point
in losing one's temper
with hot-headed followers?
It is not going to help us
finding fault
with them now.

24 Let us organise elephants,
and horses, and chariots,
and collectively go
and save the mahā-bowmen
of the Madra-rājā,
O king."

25 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
They thought it over,
and approached the warriors.
Acting on the advice of Śakuni,
rājā Duryodhana,
with a huge army,

26 Advanced, screaming lion-roars
that made the earth
tremble.
"Kill!" "Wound!"
"Capture!" "Attack!"
"Butcher him!" –

27 With these confused and cruel cries,
they advanced,
O descendant of Bharata,
Seeing the followers
of the Madra-rājā Śalya
advancing in a body,

28 The Pāṇḍava re-formed
their ranks
in the Madhyama array.
O lord of the earth!
Swiftly, in hand-to-hand combat,
the heroes

29 Of the rājā of Madra
could be seen
exterminated one by one.
Before our soldiers
could reach them,
they had all been killed.

30 And their enemies
were celebrating victory
with joyful shouts.
Headless bodies
could be seen littering
the battlefied.

31 A mahā-meteor
streamed out of
the sun-maṇḍala.
Shattered chariots,
yokes and axles,
and corpses of mahā-chariot-heroes

32 And butchered horses
covered the entire earth.
And horses still yoked
to their chariots,
and galloping
with the swiftness of wind,

33 Could be seen dragging
their warriors with them,
O mahārāja.
And some horses
were pulling chariots
with broken wheels,

34 And some horses were dragging chariots
sliced in half
in the ten directions.
Here and there,
yoked horses
could be seen toppling,

35 And chariot-riders falling
from their vehicles
could also be seen,
these finest of men falling
like perfected mortals from heaven,
their good deeds exhausted.

36 Seeing all those brave soldiers
of the Madra-rājā killed,
and our army
still advancing,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Pārtha-Pāṇḍavas,

37 Inspired by hope of victory,
blew loudly
on their conches,
and shooting volleys of arrows,
advanced
to confront us.

38 Facing us, their massive army-ranks
skilled for accuracy
and counter-attack proficiency,
shook their bows
and shattered the sky
with lion-roaring war-cries.

39 When the full realisation
struck them
that the Madrā-rājā's mahā-army
had been wiped out,
and the brave Madra-rājā
himself was no more,

40 The army of Duryodhana
once again
broke ranks and fled.
Maharājā!
Mauled
and mutilated
by the brilliant-
in-bowcraft,
confident-of-victory
Pāṇḍavas,
your dispirited army
fled
in all directions.

SECTION NINETEEN

1 With the removal of the hard-to-defeat
mahā-chariot-hero
rājā of Madra
(Sañjaya continued)
your sons and almost your entire army
fled.

2 Your soldiers were like
shipwrecked merchants
wanting to cross
the ocean
after mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira
killed the brave

3 Madra-rājā Śalya. Mahāraja!
They were petrified and helpless,
like deer
before a rampaging lion.

4 They were like bulls
with broken horns,
like elephants
with shattered tusks.
Decimated by Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
they fled at noon.

5 After the fall of Śalya,
O rājā,
not one among your soldiers
wanted to regroup and fight,
not one wanted
to show his prowess.

6 O Bharata descendant!
O lord of the world!
The terror that afflicted
your warriors
when Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
and Sūtaputra-Karṇa were killed –

7 That same traumatising and grief
was replicated now.
After the death
of the mahā-chariot-hero
Śalya,
the bereft-of-all-hope-of-victory

8 Kaurava soldiers,
whose leaders had all been slain,
feel easy prey to arrow-attacks.
O rājā!
It was the death of the Madra-rājā
that demoralised them.

9 Some on horses,
some on elephants,
the mahā-heroes in chariots –
all fled the field.
The foot-soldiers fled
as best as they could.

10 After the death of Śalya,
two thousand
hill-huge trained-to-attack elephants,
spurred
by iron goads and toes,
panicked and fled.

11 O finest of the Bharatas!
Your soldiers fled blindly
wherever they could.
I saw them,
victims of arrows,
panting and running for dear life.

12 Seeing them demoralised,
hope-bereft,
helpless, defeated,
the victory-seeking
Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas
gave chase.

[IX:19:13-18]

Transcreated by P. Lal

13 It was truly horrendous –
the cacophony
of whistling arrows,
lion-roaring war-cries of heroes,
and the blare
of conches.

14 Seeing the Kaurava warriors
in fear-striken
rout and flight,
the Pāñcālas
and the Pāṇḍavas
said to each other:

15 "Today, firm-in-truth
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
is rid of his enemies,
and radiant Duryodhana
has lost
all his royal glory."

16 "When lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
learns today
that his son is dead –
let him fall senseless
on the floor –
let him suffer!"

17 "Let him discover today
that Kuntī's son Arjuna
is the finest of skilled archers.
Let that wicked-minded criminal
today blame himself
for what has happened.

18 Let him today recall the true
and well-meant words
of Vidura."
"Let him today
become the slave
of Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira.

19 Let him remember today
what sufferings
the Pāṇḍavas went through."
"Let the earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra
realise today
the magnificence of Krishna.

20 Also let him realise today
how fearful
is the twang of Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva,
how wondrous
his skill in weapons,
how strong his two arms."

21 "Today when Bhīma kills
his son Duryodhana,
let him realise the prowess
of mahā-ātmaned Bhīma
is like that of Śakra-Indra
who routed the anti-gods."

22 "Who else in this world
but Bhīma
can have done what
Bhīma did
at the time of the slaughter
of Duḥśāsana?"

23 "And when the king hears
of the death of Śalya
whom even the gods
could not defeat,
then will he realise
the glory of Yudhiṣṭhira."

24 "When he hears of the deaths
of Subala's son Śakuni
and other leaders, then he
will realise
the indomitable strength
of Nakula and Sahadeva.

25 “How can victory not be theirs
who have on their side
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
Sātyaki, Bhīma,
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
the son of Pṛṣata,

26 Draupadī’s five sons,
the twin sons
of Madrī and Pāṇḍu,
the mahā-bowman
Śikhaṇḍin,
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira?”

27 “How can victory not be theirs
who have
lord-of-the-universe
people-punishing Janārdana-Krishna,
and Dharma itself,
as their protectors?”

28 “Gain is theirs,
and victory is theirs too,
whose lord
is all-world-irradiating
Hari-Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna.
How can they ever lose?”

29 “Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa,
the Madra-rājā Śalya,
and hundreds
of thousands
of other
brave kings –

30 Who else but Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira
could rout them in battle?
Yudhiṣṭhira’s lord
is Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna,
the eternal ocean
of truth and honour and fame.”

31 These were the sentiments
    exchanged between
the Srñjaya warriors
    as they joyfully
pursued the fleeing remnants
    of your army.

32 Simultaneously,
    valiant Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
attacked your chariot-heroes.
    Nakula, Shadeva
and the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki
    attacked Śakuni.

33 Seeing his soldiers,
    oppressed by fear of Bhīma,
panicking and fleeing,
    Duryodhana,
still hoping for victory,
    said to his charioteer:

34 "Here I am, bow in hand,
    and Pārtha-Arjuna
thinks he can get past me.
    Drive the horses
to the rear
    of my army.

35 The ocean cannot exceed
    its shores.
No matter how hard he tries,
    Kaunteya-Arjuna
will never get past me
    if I am in the rear.

36 Look, charioteer, how the Pāṇḍavas
    are decimating my army!
Look at the dust
    that blurs the field
as my warriors flee
    in all directions!

37 Listen to the lion-roaring war-cries
calculated
to frighten the warriors!
Drive slowly,
and see that the rear
is not disturbed.

38 I will stand firm in the rear
and block
the Pāṇḍava offensive.
This will inspire
my soldiers to return, re-group,
and fight afresh."

39 Complying
with these hero-worthy orders
of your son,
his charioteer slowly urged
the splendidly-caparisoned horses
as directed.

40 Twentyone thousand foot-soldiers,
with no reinforcements
of elephants,
horses and chariots,
stood firm,
ready to sacrifice their lives.

41 From many countries,
from many cities,
came these soldiers
yearning for mahā-fame,
all marshalled
for decisive battle.

42 Brimming with passionate confidence
as they stood,
the two confronting armies
dedicated
to mutual destruction –
it was a mahā-awesome spectacle.

43 Bhīma and and Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
O rājā,
led their fourfold army
in an attempt
to block the enemy soldiers
from many countries.

44 Yearning for victory,
slapping their arm-pits,
exulting and confident,
roaring war-cries,
ready to die,
the foot-soldiers faced Bhīma

45 Halting in front of him,
that excited,
difficult-to-defeat mass
of Kaurava soldiers
kept screaming war-cries,
without speaking even one word.

46 They completely encircled Bhīma
and commenced
their fierce offensive.
Bhīma absorbed
the onslaught
of their weapons and missiles,

47 As unmoved
as the mighty Mainaka mountain.
Mahārāja! Roused to fury
against the Pāṇḍava
maha-chariot-hero,
and hoping

48 To capture him alive,
they simultaneously
attacked and blocked
other warriors.
Their battle manoeuvre
incensed Bhīma hugely.

49 Leaping from his chariot,
he faced them on foot.
Wielding
his massive mace,
which was ornamented
with gold filigree,

50 He began massacring your soldiers
like the rod-wielding
god of death
Antaka-Yama.
The bull-brave hero butchered
chariot-and-horse-deprived

51 Soldiers –
all twentyone thousand of them.
Slaughtering that force
of foot-soldiers,
truly valiant
Pāṇḍava Bhīma

52 Drove up to Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
keeping him
in front.
Bathed in blood,
the foot-soldiers slept
eternally on the field,

53 Looking like crimson
karṇikāra flowers
scattered by a storm.
All of them,
variously weaponed,
variously earringed,

54 Of various communities,
from various lands,
lay dead on the field.
That mahā-force
of foot-soldiers,
marching under various flags,

55 Now reduced to a spectacle
at once grisly,
fearful, awesome.
Then Yudhiṣṭhira
with his army,
and other mahā-chariot-heroes

56 Turned their attention
to your mahā-ātmaned son
Duryodhana.
Seeing your soldiers
desert the field, the Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-hero archers

57 Tried, but failed to get past your son,
like the *makara*-filled ocean
blocked
by the shores.
We saw a wonderful deed of valour
by your son –

58 He succeeded in frustrating
all the five sons
of Pṛthā-Kuntī.
Noticing that his soldiers
had not gone too far away
from the battlefield,

59 Duryodhana addressed all
the griveously wounded soldiers:
"There is no spot
in any land,
there is no mountain
I see anywhere

60 Where the Pāṇḍavas
will not track you down
and slaughter you.
Their soldiers are few,
both Krishna and Arjuna
are sorely wounded,

61 And if we unite
and fight back now,
we will surely win.
You have harmed them enough
already.
If you scatter and flee now, .

62 They will hunt you down.
Far nobler to make a stand,
and die fighting.
Listen carefully –
all you Kṣatriyas
who are still here:

63 Death makes no distinction
between hero and coward.
That being so,
which Kṣatriya
is so foolish as to refuse
to fight?

64 It's best for us
to make a stand
and fight infuriated Bhīma.
We are Kṣatriyas!
Kṣatriya-dharma
praises death in battle.

65 Mortal man is doomed to die,
at home, or elsewhere.
Kṣatriya-dharma declares
the ideal death
for a Kṣatriya
is to die fighting.

66 Listen to me, Kauravas!
Kill here, enjoy now!
Die, enjoy fruits later!
The dharma of war
is the finest and surest path
to heaven.

67 Swiftly does he reach
the realm of heaven
who dies on the field."
The earth-rulers listened,
offered their pūjā-respect
to Duryodhana,

68 And decided
to make a united stand
against the terrorising Pāṇḍavas.
Seeing them advancing,
the aggressive Pāṇḍavas
re-organised,

69 And, yearning for victory,
the incensed sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
advanced also.
Valiant Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
prepared for battle,
standing in his chariot,

70 Twanging the bowstring
of his three-worlds-celebrated
Gāṇḍīva.
Mādrī's twin sons
Nakula and Sahadeva,
and mahā-powerful Sātyaki

71 Attacked Śakuni.
Elated and confident, they attacked,
swiftly, your army.

SECTION TWENTY

1 When the Kauravas re-organised
(continued Sañjaya),
the Mleccha-ruler Śālva,
hugely incensed,
and determined to face
the mahā-army,

[IX:20:2-6]

Transcreated by P. Lal

2 Prepared his offensive
riding a hill-huge, rutting,
equal-to-Airāvata,
the foe-crushing elephant.

3 O rājā! That elephant
had the pedigree
of the Mahābhadra breed.
It was the favourite
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana.
It was expertly trained,
a veteran of many battles.

4 Seated on that elephant,
finest-of-rājās Śālva
locked like the radiant sun
rising in the east.
Riding that splendid elephant,
he attacked the combined might
of the Pāṇḍavas,

5 And with arrows that whizzed
with the speed of the thunderbolt
of Mahendra-Indra,
he assailed his enemies.
O rājā! How long
it took him to fire
an arrow, and when
it despatched an enemy
to the realm of Yama,

6 No one could tell
from any of the two
opposing armies,
as neither the gods
nor the anti-gods, O rājā,
could tell when the thunderbolt
of Airāvata-riding
Vāsava-Indra was released
and when it killed his foes.

7

He was all alone
like Mahendra-Indra
on his Airāvata elephant,
but to the Pāṇḍavas
and Somakas and Sṛñjayas
he looked as if riding
a thousand elephants
materialising wherever
they looked on the field.

8

Attacked by that elephant,
it seemed to the warriors
that they were hemmed in
from all four sides.
So frightened were they
they rushed in all directions,
and many in the chaos
of pushing and pulling
were killed on the field.

9

What confusion was spread
in the mahā-army ranks
of the five Pāṇḍavas
by the vigorous attack
of the earth-ruler Śālva!
Unable to withstand
that Indra-among-elephants,
the Pāṇḍava soldiers
panicked and fled.

10

Observing the speed
with which the Pāṇḍava
soldiers retreated,
your warriors marvelled,
and with pūjā-respect
they honoured the prowess
of the earth-ruler Śālva,
and blew loud and long
on their moon-white conches.

11 The blare of the conches
of the Kaurava soldiers,
and their shouts of joy,
incensed Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the general of the Pāṇḍavas
and Sṛñjayas,
and the prince of the Pāñcālas,
so much so that he
could bear it no more.

12 With incredible valour,
mahātmā Dhṛṣṭadyumna
launched an attack
on the offending elephant,
like the antigod Jambha
who attacked Airāvata,
the Indra-among-elephants
of Śakra-Indra,
in the distant past.

13 Observing Dhṛṣṭadyumna
the prince of Pāñcāla
determinedly advancing
in his direction,
the lion-among-rājās
Śālva decided,
O rājā, to kill
the son of Drupada,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

14 And as the relentless
advance continued
of that Indra-among-elephants,
it became the target
of three *nārāca*-arrows
shot by Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
dazzling and polished,
swift and fearful,
incomparable arrows.

15 Mahātmā Dhṛṣṭadyumna
released another volley
of full five hundred
of the finest *nārācas.*
Grievously wounded
in the trunk, and bleeding,
that excellent elephant
wheeled and swiftly
fled from the field.

16 But Śālva was determined,
and with the help
of pain-producing hooks
he swerved the fleeing
rājā-among-elephants
back to the field,
prodding it straight
to the chariot of the Pāñcāla prince
Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

17 When he saw that elephant
lumbering towards him,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna quickly
picked up a mace
and leapt from his chariot
on to the field.
Every limb in his body
was atremble
with fear.

18 Trumpeting fiercely,
that massive-bodied beast
charged at the gold-
ornamented chariot,
and trampled to death
its horses and charioteer.
Then, with its trunk,
it lifted the vehicle
and dashed it on the ground.

19

Seeing the prince
of the Pāñcālas terrorised
by that enormous
incomperable beast,
Bhīma and Śikhaṇḍin
and Sātyaki
the grandson of Śini
raced across the field
to help Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

20

With volleys of arrows
the three chariot-heroes
succeeded in restraining
the everywhere-attacking
intemperate animal.
Unable to continue
his depredations,
he stood on the field
as if paralysed.

21

And then, like the sun
scattering its rays
everywhere on earth,
like a radiant net,
rājā Śālva released
a torrent of arrows
so intense and swift
that the Pāṇḍava chariot-heroes
scurried for safety.

22

That marvellous feat
of Śālva, O king,
made the Pāñcālas
and Sṛñjayas break
into lamentations of "Hai! Hai!"
But they rallied, and soon
they succeeded in ringing
their enemy Śalva
from all sides.

23 O Bharata descendant!
This was the time when
the prince of Pāñcāla,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, brandishing
a mace as huge
as the peak of a hill –
foe-crushing Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
at a furious speed
rushed at the elephant.

24 The irresistible son
of the Pāñcāla rājā
stormed at that hill-
huge elephant whose temples
streamed rutting juice
like masses of clouds,
and whirling his mace
he struck at the beast
again and again.

25 Its trunk shattered,
that hill-huge creature
tottered and fell
on the field of battle,
vomiting blood.
It toppled and fell
like a massive mountain
heaving and falling
during an earthquake.

26 With the fall of the beast
rose the cries of your soldiers,
a chorus of "Hai! Hai!"
And even as they shouted,
the incomparable hero
of the Śinis, Sātyaki,
with a sharp *bhalla*-arrow
severed the head
of the rājā of Śālva.

27 Beheaded by Sātyaki
the Sātvata hero,
the rājā of Śālva
fell on the field
like that rājā of elephants,
like a mountain peak
shattered to fragments
by a thunderbolt hurled
by the hand of Indra.

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 After the death of glorious Śālva
(said Sañjaya), your army
was desolated, like a giant tree
uprooted by a storm.

2 Seeing the army decimated,
the brave mahā-chariot-hero Kṛtavarman
did his best to prevent the enemy
from advancing any further.

3 Seeing Kṛtavarman standing firm,
O rājā,
the soldiers also returned
Despite the deluge of arrows,
that Satvata hero
stood strong as a hill.

4 A horrendous battle took place,
O mahārāja,
between the Pāṇḍavas
and the re-grouped Kauravas
determined to fight
to the death.

5 It was inspiring to see
Kṛtavarman singlehanded
holding back
the advance
of the difficult-to-defeat
Pāṇḍava forces.

6 Seekers of each other's welfare,
the Kaurava warriors
who witnessed this feat
so hard and unique
shouted mahā-powerful lion-roars
that rent the sky.

7 O bull-brave Bharata!
Their roars sent shock waves
among the Pāñcālas.
Śinī's grandson,
the mahā-muscled Sātyaki
advanced against the enemy.

8 With seven sharp arrows
Sātyaki despatched
the mahā-powerful
rājā Kṣemadhūrti –
who was challenging him –
to the realm of Yama.

9 Seeing the mahā-muscled
grandson of Śini, Sātyaki,
advancing under cover
of a volley of arrows,
intelligent Kṛtavarman
prepared to resist him.

10 That was how the two warriors clashed –
both mahā-valiant,
both all-weapons-proficient,
finest-of-chariot-heroes,
both brilliant bowmen –
Sātyaki and Kṛtavarman.

11 The brutal battle between
these brave bowmen
was witnessed by the
Pāṇḍava and the Pāñcālas
and the galaxy
of other eminent kings.

12 Delighting in their dreadful, deadly duel,
the elephant strong Vṛṣṇi
and the Andhaka
mahā-chariot-heroes
shot *narācā* and calf-tooth arrows
at each other.

13 Such fancy footwork
by both Kṛtavarman
and Śini's grandson Hārdikya-Sātyaki,
both bull-brave heroes,
both becoming invisible
under showers of arrows.

14 We saw the incessant showers
of arrows
of those two Vṛṣṇi lions
shrouding the sky
like swarm upon swarm
of locusts.

15 Approaching
the second-to-none-in-valour
Hṛdika's son Sātyaki,
Kṛtavarman wounded
all his four horses
with four sharp arrows.

16 Long-armed Sātyaki replied
with eight excellent arrows
that wounded Kṛtavarman.
Sātyaki reacted
with the ferocious anger
of a hook-prodded elephant.

17 Kṛtavarman pulled taut
his bowstring
and with three stone-sharpened shafts
he injured Sātyaki;
with one more,
shredded his bow.

18 Flinging aside
his irreparably damaged bow,
the bull-brave Śini hero
quickly readied another
with arrow fitted in it
for shooting.

19 The most brilliant
of all brilliant bowmen,
mahā-valiant
and mahā-powerful Sātyaki
quickly adjusted
his bow

20 And, unable to tolerate
the humiliation
of his shredded bow,
the chariot-hero
prepared to take revenge
on Kṛtavarman.

21 With ten super-sharp arrows,
the bull-brave
Śini hero Sātyaki
destroyed Krtavarman's
charioteer, horses
and war-flag.

22 O rājā! The mahā-bowman
mahā-chariot-hero Kṛtavarman,
seeing
his gold-ornamented chariot,
his horses
and charioteer destroyed,

23 Flew into a mahā-rage.
O respect-worthy monarch!
With the express intention
of killing bull-brave Sātyaki,
he hurled a *śūlā*-lance
with the full force of his arm.

24 Sātvata-Sātyaki splintered
the lance
with a volley of sharp arrows
and, as Kṛtavarman
watched amazed,
the fragments fell on the field.

25 With a *bhalla*-arrow he struck
Kṛtavarman's chest,
wounding him severely.
Deprived by Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
of his horses
and his charioteer,

26 Kṛtavarman stood alone
on the battlefield.
The uncharioting
of valiant Kṛtavarman
in that chariot-duel
with Sātyaki

27 Spread maha-fear
in the hearts
of the witnessing warriors
Deep misgiving
troubled the mind
of your son Duryodhana

28 When he saw the horses,
chariot and charioteer
of Kṛtavarman destroyed.
O foe-crusher!
seeing the horses
and charioteer destroyed,

29 Kṛpa, O rājā, rushed there,
determined to kill
the bull-brave Śini Sātyaki.
While the bowmen watched,
picking him up
in his chariot,

30 Kṛpa swiftly drove
mahā-powerful Kṛtavarman
away to safety. O rājā!
Śini's grandson Sātyaki
remained firm,
and unchariοted Kṛtavarman

31 Sped to safety,
resulting in renewed panic
among Duryodhana's soldiers.
But the dust
that swirled on the field
of battle

32 Came to their rescue. O rājā!
With the exception of Duryodhana,
everyone fled.
Seeing his soldiers
scattering in all parts of the field,
Duryodhana

33 Sought out his enemies,
trying singlehanded
to check their offensive.
He flamed with anger.
The Pāṇḍavas,
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna

34 Śikhaṇḍin,
the five sons of Draupadī,
the Kekayas,
the Somakas,
the Sṛñjayas,
O respectworthy monarch,

35 Came at the receiving end
of volleys of arrows
from your difficult-to-defeat
mahā-powerful son
Duryodhana,
fighting fearlessly.

36 Like the resplendent mahā-deity
Agni,
invoked by mantras at a yajña,
blazing brilliantly,
so rājā Duryodhana shone
dazzlingly on the field.

37 Like mortal man unable
to escape death,
his enemies dared not face him.
Just then,
Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman arrived there
in his chariot.

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya)
Your incomparable chariot-hero
difficult-to-overcome illustrious son
looked like Rudra-Śiva on the field.

2 In that oceanic army
of the Pāṇḍavas,
not a single man, horse,
elephant or chariot
was left unafflicted
by the arrows of Duryodhana.

3 His volleys of arrows
overcast the earth.
Like incessant showers
drenching a mountain,
his arrows deluged
his enemies.

4 O lord of the earth!
O descendant of Bharata!
Whichever soldier
my eyes spotted,
I found him targeted
by arrows.

5 Like the kicked-up dust
of marching soldiers
shrouding an army,
the volleys of arrows
of mahā-ātmaned Duryodhana
obscured the field.

6 O ruler of the earth!
We could see
how the swift, dexterous fingers
of the bow-expert
Duryodhana
shrouded the field.

7 To me, at least, it seemed
there was only
one real man in all those
thousands of warriors –
and that man
was Duryodhana.

8 It was wonderful to see,
O Bharata descendant,
how the entire army
of the Pāṇḍavas
was unable to repulse
that solitary hero.

9 O bull-brave Bharata!
He targeted Yudhiṣṭhira
with a hundred arrows,
Bhīma with seventy,
and Sāhadeva
with five;

10 Nakula with sixtyfour,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna with five
Draupadī's five sons
with seven,
and Sātyaki
with three.

11 O respect-worthy monarch!
With a *bhalla*-arrow
he shattered Sahadeva's bow.
Mādrī's valiant son
immediately flung aside
the damaged bow

12 And, picking up another
massive bow,
he rushed forward
and assailed
rājā Duryodhana
with ten arrows.

13 And the mahā-bowman
Nakula succeeded
in targeting Duryodhana
with nine fearful arrows,
screaming his war-cry
as he did so.

14 Sātyaki targeted
rājā Duryodhana
with a curved and knotted arrow,
Draupadī's sons
with seventy-three,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira with five,

15 And Bhīma targeted the rājā
with eighty arrows.
These mahātmā heroes
showered him
with volley upon volley
of arrows,

16 But he, mahārāja,
remained unmoved.
All the soldiers witnessed this.
Mahātmā Duryodhana's swiftness,
his arms-skill,
and his valour –

17 These virtues excelled those
  of all others
in the world of men.
  O Indra-among-rājās!
Your soldiers, seeing little difference
  between them,

18 Put on their armour, rallied,
  and formed a ring
around Duryodhana.
  Like the tumultuous roar
of the billows
  of an agitated ocean,

19 Was the fierce screaming
  of the Kauravas
poised for an offensive.
  Approaching rājā Duryodhana,
undefeated
  on the field of battle,

20 Those mahā-bowmen
  prepared themselves
to attack the Pāṇḍavas.
  The incensed son of Droṇa,
Aśvatthāman,
  targeted Bhīma,

21 Mahārāja, with a variety
  of arrows fired wildly
in all directions,
  for in that chaos
no heroes, directions, sub-directions
  could be seen.

22 O descendant of Bharata!
  Difficult-to-defeat and cruel
were those two heroes.
  They fought
a fierce duel
  of attack and retaliation.

23 Their hands were calloused
with frequent pulling of bow-strings,
they terrorised everything
around them.
Meanwhile, heroic Śakuni
started targeting Yudhiṣṭhira.

24 O radiant lord!
Subala's son Śakuni
slaughtered the four heroes
of Yudhiṣṭhira,
and enthused his own army
with rousing war-cries.

25 Immediately, illustrious Sahadeva
drove up in his chariot,
and took
the never-defeated-in-battle
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
to a place of safety.

26 Shooting from his vantage
in a new chariot,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
targeted Śakuni
with nine arrows,
followed by another five.

27 O respect-worthy monarch!
In front of all
the expert bowmen,
he shouted his mahā-war-cry.
His style of warring –
it was wonderful and fearful,

28 It delighted all who watched,
it received the praise
of Siddhas and Cāraṇas.
The mahā-bowman,
difficult-to-defeat Nakula
was targeted by Ulūka,

29 A hero
of illimitable self-confidence,
with an all-directions arrow-volley.
And brave Nakula
replied to the son of Śakuni,
Ulūka,

30 With an equally all-obscuring
shower of arrows.
Both these valiant
mahā-chariot-heroes
were born
in the noblest of families.

31 They were conscious
of upholding the honour
of their lineage as they fought
And Śini's enemy-scorching grandson
Sātyaki,
battling with Kṛtavarman,

32 Shone, O rājā,
with the glory of Śakra-Indra
battling with Bali.
Slicing the bow of Dhṛṣṭadyumna
on the field,
Duryodhana

33 Oppressed his bow-less foe
further
with a volley of sharp arrows.
But Dhṛṣṭadyumna
armed himself
with another splendid bow,

34 And continued his battle
with Duryodhana
while the other bowmen watched.
The mahā-clash
of these two warriors,
O bull-brave Bharata,

35 Appeared to all to be
like the collision
of two rutting elephants.
Elsewhere, infuriated
mahā-powerful Gautama-Kṛpa
targeted Draupadī's sons

36 With volley upon volley
of curved
and knotted arrows.
Like the embodied ātman
battling
the five senses,

37 Was that battle –
a truly horrendous clash,
with no holds barred by either.
Like the five senses
afflicting
a foolish man,

38 The five brothers afflicted Kṛpa,
who angrily
fought back.
O Bharata descendant!
What an incredible battle
was his with them –

39 As incredible as the constant struggle
between the demands of the senses
and the embodied ātman.
On the field,
men with men,
elephants with elephants,

40 Horses with horses,
and chariots with chariots
clashed again and again.
O lord of the world!
The result was a calamitous,
continuous carnage.

41 Prabhu! Lord! Mahārāja!
It was beautiful!
It was fierce!
It was horrible!
Wherever you looked,
that was the way it was.

42 All they did on the field,
those foe-exterminating warriors,
in that spectacle
of mahā-slaughter,
was clash and kill
and scream their war-cries.

43 O rājā!
Blotting the battlefield
was the dust raised
by their chariots,
the galloping horses,
and the blowing wind.

44 Like a sunset cloud
at *saṁdhyā*-time
was the thick layer of dust
produced
by chariot wheels
and heavily breathing elephants.

45 That thick dust made inglorious
the glory of the sun,
and dimmed with darkness
the earth,
and dazed
the brave mahā-chariot-heroes.

46 O most excelling Bharata!
In no time at all,
the earth was drenched
with the blood of warriors,
and then the dust settled,
and all was calm.

47 The fearful films of dust
subsided,
and there was a temporary respite.
Then, O Bharata descendant,
once again I saw
duels and clashes recommence

48 On that fierce late afternoon,
between warriors
battling with all their skill
and strength.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Their armour dazzled.

49 Like the crackle of clumps
of bamboo
in a forest conflagration,
was the noise of arrows
whistling and falling
on the battlefield.

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 In the course of the gory war
(continued Sañjaya)
the Pāṇḍavas wrought havoc
in your army's rarks.

2 Your son did succeed in rallying
the retreating mahā-chariot-heroes,
and faced
the Pāṇḍavas again.

3 And those warriors who desired
your son's victory
returned to fight for him.
The result
was another recrudescence
of colossal carnage.

4 A carnage as terrifying
as the one
between the gods and antigods,
specially because
neither your soldiers nor theirs
would now retreat.

5 They called out each other
by name
to single out foe from friend.
Mahā-gruesome
was the slaughter of soldiers
on the field.

6 Propelled by mahā-anger,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
had resolved to kill
rājā Duryodhana
and all the other sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

7 With three stone-sharpened
and gold-feathered arrows
he wounded Śāradvat-Kṛpa,
and with four *nārāca*-arrows
he killed the four horses
of Kṛtavarman.

8 Aśvatthāman drove away famed Kṛtavarman
to safety.
Śāradvat-Kṛpa
made Yudhiṣṭhira
his target
with an eight-arrow volley.

9 Rājā Duryodhana
ordered seven thousand
chariot-heroes
to proceed
where Dharma's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was stationed.

10 Carrying their warriors,
and speeding with the swiftness
of mind or wind,
the chariots
raced to the camp
of Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

11 Mahārāja!
Forming a ring round him,
they obscured him
with volleys of arrows,
like dark clouds
blotting out the sun.

12 Śikhaṇḍin
and other furious chariot-heroes
could not tolerate
the humilation
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
in this manner.

13 They raced to the rescue
of Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
in chariots
tinkling with tiny *kiṅkiṇi*-bells
and pulled
by magnificent horses.

14 Then followed the gory battle
between the Kauravas
and the Pāṇḍavas
where blood flowed freely,
adding to the population
of the kingdom of Yama.

15 The Pāṇḍavas
and their Pāñcāla allies
massacred
the seven hundred chariot-heroes,
thus preventing other enemy warriors
from advancing.

16 Your son was engaged
in a brutal battle
with the Pāṇḍavas.
Never have I seen,
never heard
of such a clash.

17 When that merciless battle began
everywhere
on the battlefield,
and your soldiers
and the enemy soldiers
began getting killed,

18 And the war-cries of warriors
rose to the skies,
and conches began blaring,
and shouted challenges
and lion-roars
and thunder-loud screams of bowmen

19 Exceeded all limits,
and the very nerves
of combatants were shattered,
and victory-seeking soldiers
ran here and there,
and, O respectworthy monarch,

20 On the field started this gory
grief-producing carnage
which made widows
of noble ladies,
forcing them to remove the vermilion
in their head's centre parting, –

21 An utterly merciless,
horrific mahā-battle –
at that time
various evil omens
could be seen,
presaging total annihilation.

22 O rājā! The mountain-and-forest-filled
earth
seemed to wobble
with thunderous noises,
and flaming rods with handles
and meteors also

23 Swept as if
from the sun-maṇḍala
and struck the earth;
winds blew from all sides,
scattering
sand and pebbles.

24 Elephants shed tears,
and trembled incontrollably.
Observing these
exceedingly horrific
and frightening
evil omens,

25 The Kṣatriyas were troubled,
but ignored them,
and prepared themselves for battle
on sacred Kurukṣetra,
inspired by hopes
of attaining heaven.

26 The Gāndhāra-rājā Śakuni
then said
to the Kaurava warriors:
"You attack the front.
I will finish off the Pāṇḍavas
from the back."

27 We advanced on the strength
of this order.
The spirited soldiers
from Madra
and others
shouted their joyous approval.

28 But suddenly the Pāṇḍavas
were upon us;
shaking their bows,
they made us their targets
and released a deluge of arrows
on us.

29 It was not long
before the enemy
wiped out the Madra warriors.
Seeing that,
Duryodhana's army again
began retreating.

30 The powerful rājā of Gāndhāra
again addressed them:
"Wicked,
ignorant-of-dharma wretches!
What's the matter with you?
Fight!"

31 O bull-brave Bharata!
At that time,
the Gāndhāra-rājā Śakuni
commanded ten thousand horsemen
armed
with huge *prāsa*-lances.

32 He led their attack
against the Pāṇḍava rear
in that man-murdering battle,
ordering them
to target the Pāṇḍavas
with sharp arrows.

33 Like a storm sweeping away
and scattering clumps of clouds,
mahārāja,
this joint offensive
dispersed the ranks
of the Pāṇḍava army.

34 Seeing his army on the verge
of panic,
mahā-powerful Yudhiṣṭhira
summoned Sahadeva,
the strong-armed one,
and said calmly:

35 "Son of Pāṇḍu,
see how devious he is –
Subala's son Śakuni
dons his armour
and stabs our army
in the back.

36 O defectless one!
Take Draupadī's sons with you,
and kill
Saubala-Śakuni.
I and the Pāñcālas
will destroy their chariots.

37 Take with you the elephants
and horses
and three thousand foot-soldiers.
Protected by them
on all sides,
finish off Śakuni."

38 Seven hundred elephants
with armed bowmen
riding them,
five hundred
of the finest horses,
valiant Sahadeva himself,

39 Three thousand foot-soldiers,
all five sons
of Draupadī –
these led the attack
on difficult-to-defeat-in-battle
Śakuni.

40 O rājā! In the meanwhile,
    The illustrious son of Subala,
Śakuni,
    yearning for victory,
continued to attack the rear ranks
    of the Pāṇḍava army.

41 The enterprising Pāṇḍava horsemen
    angrily
broke through the Kaurava
    chariot-hero defence
and entered the ranks
    of Śakui's army.

42 Stationing themselves
    in the very centre
of his battle formation,
    the brave horsemen
released showers of arrows
    on his huge army.

43 O rājā! Then that battle,
    the result
of your devious policy,
    a war of heroes, not cowards,
progressed, with warriors
    brandishing maces and lances.

44 No twang of bowstrings.
    Chariot-heroes became
mere spectators.
    No difference in the prowess
of our soldiers
    and the soldiers of our enemies.

45 O bull-brave Bharata!
    The Kaurava and Pāṇḍava ranks
saw śakti-spears,
    hurled at enemies
by strong-armed heroes,
    fall like meteors from the sky.

46 O lord of the world!
A beautiful sight –
the entire sky filled
with the dazzle
of countless flashing
and flailing swords.

47 O finest of all the Bharatas!
And the *prāsa*-lances
as they sped and fell
seemed to cover the sky
like swarms
of locusts.

48 You could see hundreds
and thousands
of blood-drenched horses
running wild
on the field
with their wounded riders.

49 And so many soldiers
in a frenzy
colliding with each other
and collapsing
on the field,
vomiting blood.

50 O foe-exterminator!
In the dusty haze
kicked up by clashing
bands of soldiers,
we noticed many
slipping away to safety.

51 Many horsemen
and many foot-soldiers,
taking advantage
of the dark, dusty haze,
fled to safety. Many lay on the field,
vomiting blood.

52 Some were clutching each other's hair
so fiercely
they seemed to be frozen.
So many mahā-powerful warriors
were dragging others down
from horses' backs.

53 Many soldiers were locked
in wrestler's combats
causing grievous injury.
So many lifeless riders
were dragged across the field
by panickly horses.

54 So many bodies
littering the battlefield,
of warriors
who dreamt of victory,
of heroes
who thought no end of themselves.

55 The field of battle
was a vast area
covered with chopped-off arms
and hundreds and thousands
of bleeding
hair-ripped heads.

56 With so many corpses
of horses and their riders
sprawled
on the field,
it was impossible for anyone
to ride across it.

57 Blood-soaked armour everywhere.
All of them
wielding a multiplicity
of fearful weapons,
with the sole aim
of butchering their foes.

58 They fought hand to hand,
and most of them
fell in fatal combat.
O lord of the world!
After a brief skirmish,
Subala's son Śakuni

59 Escaped the carnage
with six thousand
of his horsemen.
So did the Pāṇḍavas also
retire with six thousand
blood-drenched horsemen.

60 All the six thousand
were completely
worn out.
The blood-soaked
surviving horsemen
of the Pāṇḍavas,

61 Determined to fight on
even at the cost
of their lives, said:
"Chariots
are useless here.
So are mahā-elephants.

62 Let chariots
face chariots,
and elephants face elephants.
Śakuni has fled
to the safety
of his army.

63 Rājā Saubala-Śakuni
is not going
to risk another battle."
Hearing this,
Draupadī's five sons
and the rutting elephants

64 Went to the mahā-chariot-hero
of the Pāñcālas,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
O Kaurava king!
It was still dusty and hazy.
Sahadeva

65 Went by himself to where
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira was.
After they had all left,
the son of Subala,
Śakuni,
once again,

66 In a fit of anger,
from the rear,
attacked Dhṛṣṭadyumna's army.
Once again,
a tumultuous clash
between determined-to-die

67 Soldiers of your army
and the army
of your enemies.
Glaring at each other,
converging
from all directions,

68 Hundreds and thousands
of brave warriors,
O rājā,
prepared for battle.
In that doom-of-the-world clash,
sliced heads of soldiers

69 Thudded on the field
like coconuts
falling from trees.
Shredded, armour-ripped bodies
toppling
on the ground,

70 And sliced thighs,
arms clutching weapons –
O lord of the world!
a mahā-horripilating sight,
with bodies and limbs
falling *kaṭākaṭa*!

71 Like birds pecking at bits
of meat,
squabbling for their share,
the warriors
with sharp weapons
fell on brothers, sons, and friends.

72 Warriors of both sides,
battling, screamed,
"Me first, me first!"
in raging fury,
and massacred thousands
of fellow-soldiers.

73 Fatally wounded,
hundreds and thousands
of horse-riders
toppled on the ground,
and their horses
collapsed with them.

74 O lord of the world!
So many swift horses
lay writhing on the field.
Some were crushed to pulp.
So many men,
screaming and roaring,

75 Clad in armour,
sliced the bodies of their foes,
O rājā,
with śakti-spears, *ṛṣti*-swords
and *prāsa*-lances –
such a dreadful cacophony!

76 Your soldiers were exhausted,
anger gripped them,
their animals tired and collapsing,
all parched and thirsty,
bleeding profusely
from multiple wounds.

77 Crazed with the stench
of so much blood,
their conscience deadened,
they slaughtered all,
fried or foe,
who came near them.

78 O rājā! What a litter
of lifeless Kṣatriyas
crowding the battlefield,
felled by showers of arrows,
all dreaming
of a final victory.

79 On that day that swelled
the joy of wolves,
vultures and jackals,
your son witnessed
the systematic slaughter
of the Kauravas.

80 O lord of the world!
Chock-full
with the corpses of men and horses,
that blood-flowing-like-water battlefield,
that coward's-terror-increasing
battlefield!

81 O descendant of Bharata!
Your soldiers
and the Pāṇḍavas' soldiers
fought to the death
with *asi*-swords, *paṭṭiṣa*-spears
and *śūla*-lances.

82 To the last *prāṇa*-breath
they fought with all the *śakti*
they could summon,
and then they fell,
blood gushing
from their mutilated bodies.

83 You could see
many a headless trunk there,
one hand holding aloft
by the hair a severed head,
the other hand brandishing
a bloody sword.

84 O lord of men!
So many of such
headless trunks there!
So terrible the stench
that the survivors reeled
and lost their senses.

85 After some time,
the horrific tumult subsided,
and Subala's son Śakuni
once again
attacked the Pāṇḍavas
with his few surviving horsemen.

86 The bent-on-victory Pāṇḍavas
counter-attacked immediately.
In a hurry
to end the battle,
their foot-soldiers, elephants,
and horses, well-armed,

87 With weapons uplifted,
marched resistlessly, forward,
surrounded Śakuni
like a solid wall,
and targeted him
with weapons and special missiles.

88 Though they were surrounded
by the Pāṇḍavas
in that offensive manoeuvre,
your chariots, horses,
foot-soldiers and elephants
decided to attack.

89 Foot-soldier fought foot-soldier,
and when made weaponless,
grappled
with his foe;
fighting with fists,
many fell lifeless on the field.

90 Like perfected mortals,
their merits exhausted,
falling from heaven,
warriors from chariots
and riders from horses
fell on the field.

91 And that was how,
in that mahā-carnage,
victory-seeking warriors
slaughtered fathers
and brothers
and friends and sons.

92 O most excellent Bharata!
Such
was the merciless battle
fought with *prāsa*-lances,
asi-swords,
and showers of arrows.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 When the cacophony subsided
after the rout by the Pāṇḍavas
(Sañjaya said), Śakuni rallied
the remaining seven hundred horsemen.

2 Urging the Kaurava army to fight,
he said: "Foe-destroyers!
Be glad of heart and fight!
Fight bravely!" Repeatedly

3 Saying this, he asked the Kṣatriyas:
"Where is mahā-powerful
rājā Duryodhana?"
O bull-brave Bharata!
The Kṣatriyas replied
to Śakuni:

4 "The mahā-powerful Kaurava
is stationed
in the middle of the army
where the huge umbrella
can be seen
like the full moon,

5 There, where the armour-clad
bodyguards
can be seen in their chariots,
where you can hear
a roaring noise
like that of rain-clouds.

6 Proceed there, O rājā,
if you wish
to see the Kaurava king."
Following the advice
of the warriors,
Saubala-Śakuni

7 Drove to where your son
Duryodhana stood,
surrounded, O lord of men,
on all sides
by the finest
of well-versed-in-war warriors.

8 Seeing Duryodhana
in the midst
of all those warriors,
cheering and inspiring
with confidence
your chariot-heroes,

9 Śakuni, O lord of the world,
felt happy,
as if all he desired
had been accomplished,
and he said
to king Duryodhana:

10 "O rājā! Exterminate
the chariot-heroes of your enemy.
I have eliminated
their horsemen.
Unless we are ready to die,
we cannot defeat Yudhiṣṭhira.

11 First let us wipe out
the chariot-ranks
of Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira;
then we will slaughter
the elephants, the horses,
and the foot-soldiers."

12 Inspired by these words
of victory-aspiring Śakuni,
your solders,
with cheerful valour,
launched an offensive
against the Pāṇḍavas.

13 They opened the flaps
of their quivers,
they brandished and waved
their bows,
and they broke
into lion-roaring war-cries.

14 O lord of the world!
Once again
we heard the fearful twang
of bowstrings
and the whistling
of volleys of arrows.

15 Seeing them advancing swiftly
with uplifted bows,
Kuntī's son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
said to Devakī's son
Krishna:

16 "Urge the horses and drive me
carefully
to the centre
of this oceanic army.
I will kill my enemies
with sharp arrows.

17 O Janārdana-Krishna!
O terroriser-of-people!
Today is the eighteenth day
since the start
of hostilities
between us and them.

18 These mahātmā warriors
had an army so vast
it could not be counted.
The war has destroyed
most of it.
See! It's all destiny.

19 O Mādhava-Krishna!
Acyuta-Krishna!
The ocean-vast army
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
is now he size
of a cow's hoof print.

20 Had Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
made peace with us
after Bhīṣma's death,
all would have benefited;
but that fool, O Madhava-Krishna,
did not do so.

21 O Mādhava-Krishna!
Devoid of commonsense,
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
refused to listen
to the well-meant advice
of Bhīṣma.

22 Then the vicious war began,
and Bhīṣma lay dead
on the bed of earth.
I do not know why,
but the war went on
and on and on.

23 I thought it was foolish
and simple-minded
of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
to drag the war on
even after Bhīṣma
had been killed.

24 Then, well-versed-in-Veda-wislom
Droṇa died;
then Rādhā's son Karṇa;
then Vikarṇa;
but the butchery
did not stop.

25 Even the deaths
of the tiger-among-men,
the charioteer's son Karṇa,
and all his sons,
which decimated their army,
did not stop the war.

26 Śrutāyū, valiant Jalasandha,
Paurava
and king Śrutāyudha died,
but the war
went on
and on.

27 O Janārdana-Krishna!
Bhūriśravas and Śalya,
Śālva and the heroes of Avanti
perished,
but the war
went on and on.

28 Jayadratha and Bāhlika,
Somadatta and
the rākṣasa Alāyudha –
they all perished,
but the war
went on and on.

29 Bhagadatta and the valiant
Kāmboja-ruler Sudakṣiṇa,
and fearful Duḥśāsana –
they all perished,
but the war
went on and on.

30 O Krishna!
It saw the deaths
of so many rulers
of so many land-maṇḍalas,
but the war
went on and on.

31 It saw the extermination
of many *akṣauhiṇī*-leaders,
but whatever the reason –
greed or folly –
the war
went on and on.

32 Who is there born
in a royal family,
other than Duryodhana
of the very special
Kaurava royalty,
who will fight such a useless war?

33 Who is there who,
knowing another to be more talented,
stronger and braver than him,
forgetting
his own good or ill,
will still fight such a pesson?

34 How will they listen
to the advice of another
who did not listen to you
when you advised them
for their own good
to make peace with the Pāṇḍavas?

35 What medicine is there
for a person who rejected
the advice of Śāntanu's
heroic son Bhīṣma,
and Droṇa,
and Vidura?

36 O Janārdana-Krishna!
The fool who refused
to listen to his old father,
and went to the extent
of insulting his own mother
who sought his welfare –

37 How can such a person
ever appreciate
the advice of others?
O Janārdana-Krishna!
Surely this one is born
to destroy his race.

38 O lord of the world!
We can see this clearly
from his plans and his deeds.
O Acyuta-Krishna!
I do not think he is going
to return us our kingdom.

39 *Tāta*! Krishna! Dear friend!
Mahātmā Vidura
warned me many times:
'O respectworthy one!
So long as he lives, Duryodhana
will not divide the kingdom.

40 So long as he breathes,
this ill-minded son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
will not stop his wickedness
against all
his unwicked relatives.'

41 O Mādhava-Krishna!
'War is the only way
of defeating Duryodhana.'
Truth-seeing Vidura
has always given me
this advice.

42 Today I have realised
that every deed
of ill-ātmaned Duryodhana
conforms exactly
to the insight I was given
by mahā-ātmaned Vidura.

43 The wicked person who spurned
the beneficial advice
given by Jamadgni's son
Paraśurāma himself –
is surely awaiting
his own doom.

44 At the hour of the birth
of Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
perfected Siddhas prophesied:
'This ill-ātmaned one
will bring about the end
of the Kṣatriyas.'

45 O Janārdana-Krishna!
Haven't their words
turned out to be true?
Isn't Duryodhana
responsible for the deaths
of so many rājās?

46 O Mādhava-Krishna!
Today on the field
I will kill all these warriors.
With all these Kṣatriyas
dead,
and all their camps empty,

47 He will emerge to fight
with us
and meet his own death.
O Mādhava-Krishna!
I think only then
will all this bitterness end.

48 O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Brave one!
My thinking, Vidura's words,
and Duryodhana's deeds
have made me come
to this conclusion.

49 O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
Drive me
to face the Kaurava army,
so that I
can destroy Duryodhana
and his warriors.

50 O Mādhava-Krishna!
I will wipe out
the weak remnants
of Duryodhana's army,
and redeem the honour
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira."

51 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
Krishna of the Dāśārhas
picked up the reins
and fearlessly drove Savyasācī-Arjuna
to the ocean-huge army
of his enemies.

52 A forest of lances
and swords and arrows!
Śakti-spears its thorns,
maces and *parigha*-clubs
its paths,
chariots and horses its trees

53 Horsemen and foot-soldiers
its creepers –
mahā-illustrious Govinda-Krishna
drove freely through
that forest-army
his high flag-flying chariot.

54 O rājā!
Urged by Dāśārha-Krishna,
that white-horsed chariot
with Arjuna in it
was visible
from all the ten directions.

55 Like rain-clouds cascading
their showers,
foe-crushing Arjuna
advanced in the chariot,
discharging
hundreds of sharp arrows.

56 Frightening was the mahā-noise
of those curved
and knotted arrows.
The arrows of ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
did not stick in the foe's armour.

57 They pierced right through
the armour
and slid into the earth.
Speeding
from the Gāṇḍīva,
hard like Indra's thunderbolt,

58 O lord of the world,
they massacred
men and elephants and horses,
streaking
through the sky
like swarms of insects.

59 The arrows of the Gāṇḍīva
darkened
the entire battlefield sky,
so much so
the directions and sub-directions
were not visible.

60 It seemed the whole world
was shrouded
by those arrows
carved with Arjuna's name,
with gold feathers,
and polished with oil.

61 Trapped like elephants
in a forest fire
were the enemies
by Pārtha-Arjuna's sharp arrows,
but they stood firm,
they did not retreat.

62

Like dry grass consumed
by a raging fire,
your soldiers were consumed
by the flaming sun
called Pārtha-Arjuna
the bow-and-arrow-wielder.

63

Like a forest-fire
started by forest-dwellers
that grows in intensity
and slowly starts consuming
first the dry grass,
then the crowded trees,
then plants and creepers,
till all vegetation
is reduced to ashes,

64

So Arjuna with his flaming
nārāca-arrow volleys,
bright burning shafts,
swift and energetic
and irresistibly radiant
Arjuna on the battlefield
soon enough reduced
the chariots of your son
to heaps of ashes.

65

His gold-feathered arrows,
accurately aimed,
did not stop at the armour
on his enemy's chest,
but pierced right through.
Never did he need
a second arrow
to kill man or horse
or a huge elephant.

66 Like thunder-wielding Indra
battling by himself
the Daitya antigods,
Arjuna all alone
penetrated the ranks
of your son's chariots,
and with volleys of arrows
of various kinds
wreaked absolute havoc.

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 With his Gāṇḍīva (said Sañjaya)
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
frustrated the victory-hopes
of vowed-never-to-retreat Kauravas.

2 Like clouds pouring rain
he released his volleys
of arrows,
which were mahā-powerful,
and as hard to the touch
as Indra's thunderbolt.

3 O best of the Bharatas!
Wilting
under the attack of diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
the remaining soldiers fled
in Duryodhana's very presence.

4 Some abandoned their mothers
and fathers, and fled;
others their friends.
Many saw their chariot-horses
killed,
many their charioteers.

5 O lord of the world!
Many chariots
had broken axles, yokes,
wheels and shafts;
many had their bows shattered;
many had no more arrows.

6 Some, though not wounded,
were terror-stricken,
and fled; some, who had lost
all their other relatives,
took their sons with them,
and fled.

7 O tiger-among-men!
Some shouted for their fathers,
some for their comrades.
Others abandoned their brothers
and any close relatives
and fled wherever they could.

8 O lord of the world!
In that scene
of total confusion,
many mahā-chariot-heroes,
struck by arrows,
fell senseless where they stood.

9 Felled by Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows,
many fell
panting on the ground.
They were picked up
and consoled by other
chariot-heroes,

10 Given water to drink,
after which theri saviours
returned to the battlefield.
So many others,
eager to fight,
simply abandoned the wounded

11 And, following your son's orders,
these battle-hardened warriors,
returned to fight
once more.
Others quenched their thirst,
and rested their horses.

12 Then, donning their armour,
they returned
to the field of battle.
O finest of the Bharatas!
Taking to the safety of their camps
their brothers,

13 Sons and fathers,
they went back to fight.
O lord of the world!
Others,
loading their chariots
with the finest war equipments,

14 Advanced to fight the Pāṇḍavas,
but strictly
according to rank.
These brave heroes,
in their chariots
tinkling with *kiṅkiṇi*-bells,

15 Were like Daitya and Dānava antigods
out to conquer
the three worlds.
Some advanced swiftly
in their magnificent
gold-ornamented chariots,

16 Entered the Pāṇḍava ranks,
and attacked
Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
The Pāñcāla prince
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the mahā-chariot-hero Śikhaṇḍin,

17 And Nakula's son Śatānīka
were engaged
in fighting your chariot army.
With a huge army.
the infuriated Pāñcāla prince
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

18 Pledged to kill them all,
launched a vicious attack
on your soldiers.
O ruler of men!
Targeting Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
your son

19 Counter-attacked with a volley
of arrows.
O descendant of Bharata!
O rājā!
Your brilliant-bowman son
targeted Dhṛṣṭadyumna

20 With *nārāca*-arrows,
with half-*nārācas*,
swift-speeding *vatsa-danta*-
calf-tooth arrows,
and many other
expertly crafted shafts.

21 With these he killed
Dhṛṣṭadyumna's four horses
and wounded his arms and chest.
Infuriated
like a hook-prodded elephant,
bow-expert Dhṛṣṭadyumna

22 Killed all the four horses
of Duryodhana
with a volley of arrows,
and with a single *bhalla*-shaft
severed the head
of Duryodhana's charioteer.

23 His chariot destroyed,
Duryodhana, exterminator of enemies,
quickly mounted a horse
and galloped
a safe distance away
from the battlefield.

24 Seeing his army routed, mahārāja,
your mahā-powerful son
rode to the place
where the son of Subala,
Śakuni,
was stationed.

25 After the destruction
of the chariots,
three thousand Kaurava
mahā-elephants
surrounded
the Pāṇḍava chariot-ranks.

26 O descendant of Bharata!
Mahārāja!
Ringed by those elephants
the five brothers
looked resplendent,
like five cloud-ringed planets.

27 Targeting those chariots,
mahārāja,
mahā-armed white-horsed
sure-aimed Arjuna,
with Krishna as charioteer,
made his appearance.

28 Reaching the centre
of the ranks
of those hill-huge elephants,
he attacked
with super-sharp,
smooth *nārāca*-arrows.

29 We saw those mahā-elephants
fall one by one,
each sruck by a single arrow
from the bow
of ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna.

30 And Bhīma,
himself as strong
as a rutting elephant,
swiftly leapt
from his chariot,
massive mace in hand,

31 And stood there
like rod-wielding Antaka-
Yama, the god of death.
Seeing the Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-hero
brandishing his mace,

32 Your soldiers trembled in terror,
and passed urine and faeces
on the battlefield.
The army panicked
seeing mace-armed wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

33 We saw the temples of elephants
smashed
by the mace of Bhīma,
and the hill-huge
bloodied beasts
running wild.

34 Brutally wounded by the mace,
we saw them
trumpeting and collapsing
on the field,
like mountains
with their wings cut off.

35 Seeing those temple-smashed elephants
lumbering
helter-skelter
and collapsing on the field,
your soldiers were paralysed
with fear.

36 Yudhiṣṭhira also, helped
by Mādrī and Pāṇḍu's twin sons,
angrily pierced the elephants
with vulture-feathered arrows,
and sent them
to the abode of Yama.

37 In the meantime,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna had vanquished
ruler-of-men Duryodhana.
When your son
fled the field of battle
on horseback,

38 Dhṛṣṭadyumna diverted
his next attention
to the Pāṇḍavas who,
O mahārāja,
were being attacked
by the elephants,

39 So the Pāñcāla prince
drove up there
to target those elephants.
Meanwhile,
noticing foe-crushing Duryodhana
was not in the chariot-ranks,

40 Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa,
and Kṛtavarman
of the Śatvatas
asked all
the Kṣatriyas there:
"Where is Duryodhana?

41 Not seeing rājā Duryodhana
  anywhere
in that all-killing carnage,
  those mahā-chariot-heroes
assumed
  that he had died,

42 And sorrowfully
  started asking everyone
about him.
  Some replied: "After the death
of his charioteer . . .
  where Saubala-Śakuni is . . .

43 Leaving the formidable army
  of the Pāñcāla rājā . . .
that's where he went."
  Other grievously
wounded Kṣatriyas
  volunteered this information:

44 "Why ask about Duryodhana?
  You can't miss seeing him
if he is alive.
  Our business is to fight.
Unite and fight! Why worry
  about rājā Duryodhana?"

45 Still other Kṣatriyas,
  who had lost their chariots and horses,
and were bleeding
  from arrow wounds,
mumbled
  these indistinct words:

46 "We are surrounded
  by the enemy.
Let us kill them first.
  The Pāṇḍavas have killed
our elephants,
  and are now after us."

47 Mahā-powerful Aśvatthāman
listened to them.
He penetrated
the hard-to-overcome ranks
of the Pāñcāla rājā
Dhṛṣṭadyumna

48 And, with Kṛtavarman
and Kṛpa,
he swerved through the ranks
of the chariot army,
and went to where
Śakuni was stationed.

49 O rājā!
After they left,
the Pāṇḍavas,
led by Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
after fiercely routing your soldiers,
arrived there.

50 Your valiant warriors
saw the exultant
and confident Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes
about to attack,
and they lost heart.

51 The faces of most of them paled.
All their weapons
had been destroyed.
They were ringed by enemies.
Seeing them
in this deplorable plight,

52 O rājā, I forgot about
my own safety,
and with four other warriors,
I led our horses and elephants
against the army
of the Pāñcāla Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

53 I fought alongside
Sāradvata-Kṛpa.
But the five of us
were afflicted
by the arrows
of diadem-decked Kirīṭin-Arjuna,

54 And simultaneously
locked in battle
with mahā-fearful Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
He defeated all of us.
I had no option
but to flee.

55 I saw the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki
approaching
in my direction.
That brave hero attacked me
with a force
of four hundred chariot-warriors.

56 I had barely escaped
from the exhausted horsemen
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
and now I became the target
of Sātyaki of the Mādhavas.
Oh, it was sheer hell!

57 A brief, brutal battle –
and all was over.
Mahā-muscled Sātyaki
made short work
of all the war weapons
I had.

58 I fell senseless on the field,
and I was captured
alive.
Then, before I knew it,
the elephant ranks
of our army

59 Were slaughtered
by Bhīma's mace
and Arjuna's *nārāca*-arrows.
On all sides
sprawled these hill-huge
mahā-elephants,

60 Whose corpses blocked
the advance
of the Pāṇḍava forces.
Mahā-powerful Bhīma
created
a chariot-path,

61 Mahārāja, for the Pāṇḍavas
by pushing aside
those dead mahā-elephants.
Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa,
Kṛtavarman,
and Sātyaki of the Sātvatas –

62 Those four, not finding
your mahā-chariot-hero
foe-crushing son,
rājā Duryodhana,
in the chariot-ranks,
organised a search for him.

63 So they left battling
the Pāñcāla prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
and went to Śakuni.
Very depressed were they,
not seeing rājā Duryodhana
anywhere.

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 O Bharata descendant (said Sañjaya),
Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma
had massacred your elephant ranks
and other soldiers also;

2 In fact, foe-exterminating Bhīma
could be seen moving angrily,
at will, like *prāṇa*-breath-stealing,
rod-wielding Antaka-Yama;

3 O rājā! That was when
Kaurava Duryodhana
could not be seen anywhere;
when the surviving warriors,
the remnants
of your son's army

4 Decided to unite
and again attack Bhīma.
Durmarṣaṇa, Śrutānta-Citrāṅga,
Jaitra,
Bhūribala-Bhīmabala,
and Ravi,

5 Jayatsena, Sujāta,
Durviṣaha-Durvigāha,
enemy-exterminator
Durvimocana,
as well as
Duṣpradharṣa-Duṣpradharṣaṇa,

6 And mahā-muscled Śrutarvā –
all these
well-versed-in-war
sons of yours
formed a united force
which from all sides

7 Launched an all-encompassing offensive
against Bhīma.
Bhīma, too, mahārāja,
mounted his chariot

8 And attacked your sons
with volleys of sharp arrows
When Bhīma in that mahā-clash
released his arrows, your sons

9 Seemed to attract him towards them
like an elephant attracting a hunter.
Angry Bhīma targeted Durmarṣaṇa

10 With an arrow
as sharp
as a razor,
and sliced
his head
clean;
it fell on the field.
With an armour-piercing
bhalla-arrow,

11 Bhīma,
the mahā-chariot-hero,
ended the life
of your son Śrutānta.
Next, smiling,
with a *nārāca*-arrow
he killed
Jayatsena.

12 The hero
of the Kauravas,
toppling him
from his chariot-seat.
O rājā!
Jayatsena died
the instant
his body
touched the ground.

13 O Māriṣa!
O respectworthy monarch!
With arrows
fitted with
vulture-feathers
and curved and knotted shafts –
a hundred of them –
Śrutarvā targeted Bhīma.

14 This so
  infuriated Bhīma
that he targeted
  Jaitra and Bhūribala
and Ravi
  – these three –
with three fearful arrows
  tipped
with fire and venom.

15 Struck
  by those three arrows,
the three mahā-chariot-heroes
  toppled
like full-blossoming
  kiṁśuka trees
cut in their prime
  in springtime.

16 With another sharp
  bhalla-arrow,
foe-exterminating Bhīma
  targeted Durvimocana
and despatched him
  to the realm of death.

17 Finest of chariot-warriors
  Durvimocana fell
from his chariot
  and hit the ground
like a hill-top tree
  uprooted by a storm.

18 Next to die
  were your two sons
Duṣpradharṣa and Sujāta
  who were targeted
as the army's leaders
  with two arrows each.

19 The arrow-pierced corpses
of those two valiant
mahā-chariot-heroes
sprawled on the field.
Then,
seeing your son

20 Durviṣaha advancing,
Bhīma struck him dead
with a *bhalla*-arrow.
The bow-brilliant warriors
watched him pierced by the arrow
topple on the field.

21 Seeing so many of his brothers
felled by Bhīma
on the battlefield,
anger-inflamed Śrutarvā
advanced in his chariot
to challenge Bhīma.

22 He had pulled the string
of his massive bow taut,
and from it sped
a volley of arrows
tipped with fire
and venom.

23 O rājā! In that mahā-clash
he succeeded
in slicing the Pāṇḍava's bow,
after which
he targeted bow-less Bhīma
with twenty arrows.

24 Mahā-powerful Bhīma quickly
fitted another bow,
and deluged your son
with arrows,
shouting: "Stop!
Stay where you are!"

25 The clash that followed
between the two of them
was like the wondrous,
fierce duel
between Jambha and Vāsava-Indra
in the distant past.

26 The earth, the sky,
the directions
and the subdirections
were darkened
by the sharp arrows
resembling the rod of Yama.

27 O rājā!
Infuriated Śrutarvā targeted
with his large bow
both the arms
and the chest
of Bhīma.

28 Mahārāja! Severely wounded
by your son,
the wrath of Bhīma
welled up
like the mahā-ocean
at full moon.

29 O respectworthy monarch!
Overpowered by rage,
Bhīma released a volley of arrows
that sent
your son's four horses and charioteer
to Yama's realm.

30 Filled with illimitable self-confidence,
Bhīma
saw Srutarva unchårioted
and swiftly
deluged him with a volley
of feathered arrows.

31 O rājā! Unchariotted Śrutarvā
picked up
his shield
embossed with a hundred moons,
and a sword
that flashed brilliant lustre,

32 But Bhīma with a razor-arrow
severed his head
from his body.
Sliced
by mahā-ātmaned Bhīma
with a razor-arrow,

33 The head thudded on the field.
The earth
reverberated with the noise.
The fall
of that hero
made your soldiers shudder;

34 Nonetheless,
determined to do battle,
they advanced against Bhīma.
Seeing the surviving warriors
of the huge army
about to attack him,

35 Illustrious Bhīma
stood his ground
and blocked
the heavily armour-clad warriors.
They succeeded in closing in on him
from all sides.

36 Like thousand-eyed Indra
repulsing the antigods,
Bhīma used sharp arrows
to beat back
all your warriors
who tried to surround him.

37 He went on to destroy five
hundred mahā-chariots
along with their fenders,
and massacred
seven hundred war-elephants –
a repeat performance!

38 Next, slaughtering a lakh
foot-soldiers
and eight hundred horses
and their riders,
Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma
glowed with glory.

39 Prabhu! Lord!
After this massacre of your sons,
Kuntī's son Bhīma
felt his mission
had been accomplished,
his birth fruitful.

40 O lord of men!
That is why
all your soldiers
did not even dare to look at Bhīma
the war-wizard,
the exterminator of your sons.

41 Scattering the Kauravas
and killing their followers,
terrorising the war-elephants,
Bhīma stood there,
slapping both his armpits
with loud delight.

42 O lord of the world!
Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
With most of its warriors dead,
and only a few surviving,
profound depression dispirited
your remaining army.

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya)
Only two of your sons,
Duryodhana and Sudarṣaṇa, survived.
They were in the centre of the cavalry.

2 Seeing Duryodhana stationed
in the centre
of the horsemen,
Devakī's son Krishna
said
to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:

3 "Most of our enemies
are dead.
You have saved our family.
Look, bull-brave Sātyaki
is coming here,
bringing Sañjaya as his prisoner.

4 O descendant of Bharata!
Battling the wicked sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and their followers
has totally exhausted
Nakula and Sahadeva.

5 On their side,
Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman
and the mahā-chariot-hero Aśvatthāman
have left Duryodhana
and gone elsewhere
on the battlefield.

6 On our side,
the Pāñcāla prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
after destroying the army
of Duryodhana,
shines with glory
in the midst of the Prabhadrakas.

7 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Look, there is Duryodhana,
among the horsemen,
under that umbrella.
He keeps glancing in our direction
again and again.

8 He has formed
his plan of attack
on the battlefield.
Kill him with sharp arrows,
and fulfil
your life's mission.

9 O foe-exterminator!
Kill Suyodhana-Duryodhana
before his Kaurava soldiers
see you advance
after killing their elephants –
and panic and run away.

10 Send one of us
to the Pāñcāla prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna
saying, 'Come, now, quickly.'
Tāta! My friend!
Wicked Duryodhana cannot escape.
His soldiers are dead-tired.

11 Duryodhana thinks:
'I'll wipe out Arjuna's army,
and the Pāṇḍavas will surrender.'
That is the reason
he is so fierce
and unbending.

12 But there is not doubt
king Duryodhana will see
the Pāṇḍavas wipe out
his army instead.
He goes to the battlefield
inviting his own doom."

13 To these words of Krishna,
Phālguna-Arjuna replied:
"O Mādhava-Krishna,
almost all the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
have been killed
by Bhīma.

14 These two who remain here,
they will also
be killed today, Krishna.
Bhīṣma is dead;
so also, Krishna, is Droṇa;
Vaikartana-Karṇa is dead.

15 The rājā of Madra Śalya
is dead, Krishna;
Jayadratha is dead.
Subala's son Śakuni
has five hundred horsemen
with him.

16 Also, Janārdana-Krishna,
he still commands
more than a hundred
war-elephants,
and three thousand
foot-soldiers.

17 Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa,
the Trigarta ruler
Suśarmā, Ulūka,
Śakuni,
and Kṛtavarman
of the Sātvatas –

18 These few, Mādhava-Krishna,
are still there
in the army of Duryodhana.
None in this world
escapes the clutches
of cosmic Kāla –

19 That is why Duryodhana
will not give up,
despite his army's destruction.
Look at him!
Today will see the end of all
the foes of mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

20 I do not think, Krishna,
a single enemy
will escape me today.
If there is anyone
so foolish and mad
that he will not run away –

21 Be he god, be he human –
I will not
spare him today.
First I will kill
the Gāndhāra rājā Śakuni
with sharp arrows.

22 And end the unending sleeplessness
that afflicts
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
The jewels
that Saubala-Śakuni
deceitfully won

23 In the dice-game in the sabhā –
I will get them back today.
They will weep today,
they will weep,
all the women
of Hastināpura,

24 The elephant city Nāgapura,
when they hear
the Pāṇḍavas have killed
their husbands and sons.
Today will see
our mission accomplished, Krishna.

25 Today will see the end
of Duryodhana's life
and glowing glory.
Krishna,
if fear does not make him
run away from me,

26 Then be assured,
O Krishna of the Vṛṣṇis,
he will die at my hands today.
O foe-crusher!
These horsemen are afraid
of the twang of my bowstring.

27 Drive me to them,
for I have determined
to kill them."
Illustrious Pāṇḍava Arjuna
said this
to Dāśārha-Krishna

28 Who, O rājā, then urged
the chariot-horses
towards Duryodhana's army.
Seeing that army,
three excellently equipped
mahā-chariot-heroes –

29 Bhīma, Arjuna and Sahadeva –
advanced in formation,
O respectworthy monarch,
to kill Duryodhana,
and screamed
their lion-roaring war-cries.

30 Seeing the three of them
advancing swiftly
with bows upraised,
Subala's son Śakuni
raced across the field
to repulse the Pāṇḍavas.

31

Your son Sudarṣaṇa
took on Bhīma.
Suśarmā and Śakuni
united to fight
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

32

O ruler of men!
Mounted on his horse,
your son Duryodhana
attacked Sahadeva.
Taking aim,
he swiftly

33

Hurled a *prāsa*-lance
at Sahadeva's head.
Struck by your son's lance,
Sahadeva took cover
at the back
of the chariot;

34

He was bleeding profusely,
and sighing heavily
like a poisonous snake.
But he recovered quickly,
O lord of the world,
and deluged Duryodhana with arrows.

35

Sharp were the arrows
of Sahadeva
ablaze now with anger.
And Kuntī's son,
Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
displaying his prowess,

36

Severed the heads
of many warriors
on horseback.
With countless arrows,
Pārtha-Arjuna decimated
the horseback warriors,

37 And then turned his fury
    on the chariot-heroes
of Trigarta.
    The Trigarta
mahā-chariot-heroes
    in a united sortie

38 Shrouded Vāsudeva-Krishna
    and Arjuna
with a downpour of arrows.
    With a razor-arrow,
Satyakarman was targeted
    by mahā-renowned

39 Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
    and his chariot's *īṣā*-shaft wrecked.
O radiant lord!
    With a stone-sharpened
razor-arrow,
    mahā-renowned Arjuna

40 Sliced the golden-ear-ringed head
    of his enemy.
And while the rest
    of the warriors watched,
he attacked
    and killed Satyeṣu,

41 Like a famished lion,
    rājā,
mauling and killing a deer.
    Killing Satyeṣu,
with three arrows
    Pārtha-Arjuna wounded Suśarmā,

42 After which he decimated
    the entire
gold-ornamented chariot-division.
    Then, his rage,
suppressed for so long, surfacing,
    Pārtha-Arjuna

43

Turned its venom
on the ruler of Prasthala, Suśarmā.
Shrouding him
with a hundred arrows,
O bull-brave Bharata,
Arjuna

44

Launched a vicious attack
on that expert
bowman's horses.
With an arrow
that resembled
the rod of Yama,

45

Smiling,
he selected Suśarmā
as his target.
Shot by brilliant-bowman Arjuna
blazing with rage,
that arrow

46

Sped towards Suśarmā
and plunged
in his heart.
Mahārāja!
He dropped dead
on the earth –

47

To the delight
of the Pāṇḍavas
and the despair of your sons.
After killing Suśarmā,
the mahā-chariot-hero
sons of Suśarmā –

48

All fortyfive of them –
were massacred
by Arjuna's arrows.
Exterminating
with sharp arrows
all the followers of Suśarmā,

49 The mahā-chariot-hero
Arjuna concentrated
next on the surviving
Bharata warriors.
O ruler of men!
Elsewhere, infuriated Bhīma

50 Smilingly targeted your son Sudarśana
with his arrows.
Laughing loudly,
he angrily
sliced Sudarśana's head
from his body

51 With a razor-arrow
of extreme sharpness.
The dead hero toppled
on the earth.
Their heroic leader dead,
his followers

52 Retaliated with arrows,
and formed a ring
around Bhīma.
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
selected extremely
sharp arrows

53 As adamantine
as the thunderbolt of Indra,
and shrouded your army with them.
In no time,
O bull-brave Bharata,
he devastated the army.

54 O Bharata descendant!
When the devastation
began of the army,
its mahā-chariot-heroes
made a desperate attempt
at counter-attack.

55 O rājā! Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma
ravaged them with arrows;
they replied
with a counter-volley
that shrouded
the Pāṇḍava mahā-chariot-heroes.

56 What a tumultuous mix-up
took place then!
The field was a seething mass
of the Pāṇḍavas
battling their foes, and your army
battling the Pāṇḍavas.

57 O rājā! They fought,
and they killed
each other, and they died,
lamenting as they fell
the deaths
of their relatives and friends.

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 The carnage continued (said Sañjaya)
of men and horses and elephants,
and Subala's son Śakuni,
O rājā, attacked Sahadeva.

2 Valiant Sahadeva replied
to the attack
with a swift retaliatory shower
of arrows
that darkened the sky
like a swarm of locusts.

3 With Śakuni was Ulūka,
and he, mahārāja,
targeted Bhīma
with ten arrows.
With three arrows
blocking Bhīma,

4 With ten more arrows
Śakuni shrouded Sahadeva.
O rājā!
Those brave warriors,
locked in fierce
mutual encounters,

5 Attacked and counter-attacked
with volleys
of sharp
kaṅka-peacock-feathered,
gold-winged, stone-sharpened,
ear-taut-shot arrows.

6 O lord of the world!
The arrow-deluge
of those shafts fired
by muscular heroes
was like torrential showers
from sky-shrouding clouds.

7 O Bharata descendant!
Driven
by fierce anger,
the two mahā-powerful heroes,
Bhīma and Sahadeva,
dominated the battlefield.

8 O descendant of Bharata!
So many hundreds
of arrows covered your army
that it looked in places
like the sky desolated
in darkness.

9 O lord of the world!
In the arrow-created darkness,
horses dragging
dead heroes with them,
fled, but did not find
which way to escape.

10 O respectworthy monarch!
Corpses of horses
and their riders,
shredded pieces
of armour,
prāsa-barbed-darts,

11 *Ṛṣṭi*-swords, *śakti*-spears,
asi-scimitars,
prāsa-lances, *paraśu*-axes,
and other weapons
made the earth look
like a flowering garden.

12 Mahārāja! The field
was full
of anger-possessed warriors
moving about
looking for anyone
to fight and wound.

13 So many sliced heads
graced with earrings,
looking like lotuses,
lay on the field,
with staring eyes
and anger-bitten lips.

14 Mahārāja! Elephant-trunk-
shaped arms clutching
lances and hatchets,
arm-ornaments, armour,
and *asi*-swords,
mutilated headless

15 Upright bodies that seemed
to be dancing
on the field,
and flesh-eating scavenging beasts
roaming everywhere –
a ghastly spectacle!

16 There were not very many
of the Kaurava
soldiers left,
and the Pāṇḍavas delightedly
went about
exterminating them.

17 In one such encounter,
the illustrous son of Subala,
Śakuni,
hurled a *prāsa*-lance
that severely injured
Sahadeva's forehead.

18 Mahārāja! In deep pain,
Sahadeva slumped
in the top seat of his chariot.
Seeing Sahadeva
in acute distress,
illustrious Bhīma

19 In a fit of rage
stopped your entire army
from advancing,
O Bharata descendant,
with hundreds and thousands
of well-aimed *nārāca*-arrows.

20 Foe-exterminating Bhīma
terrorised the enemy army
and screamed his lion-roaring war-cry.
Stupefied
by the noise
of that war-cry,

21 Śakuni's terrified followers,
with their horses and elephants,
broke ranks.
Seeing them fleeing,
rājā Duryodhana
admonished them:

22 "O you men of adharma!
Stop! Turn back!
What will you again by running?
Fame in this life
and perfect happiness
in the next

23 Are for the strong who stay firm
and are ready
to sacrifice their lives
if need be."
These words of rājā Duryodhana
made Śakuni's followers

24 Say, "Only death will make
us turn back now,"
and they restarted attacking
the Pāṇḍavas.
What a noise they made,
O Indra-among-rājās,

25 When they began the attack –
like the reverberations
of an agitated ocean.
Seeing the followers
of Śakuni returning
to battle,

26 The eager-for-victory Pāṇḍavas
advanced as well.
In the meantime,
O lord of the world,
difficult-to-defeat Sahadeva
had recovered;

27 He targeted Śakuni
with ten arrows,
killed his horses with three,
and, smiling,
with more arrows he shattered
Saubala-Śakuni's bow.

28 With a substitute bow,
valiant-in-war Śakuni
afflicted Nakula
with sixty,
and Bhīma
with seven arrows.

29 Mahārāja! In the course
of protecting his father,
Ulūka targeted
Bhīma with seven,
and Sahadeva
with seventy arrows.

30 Bhīma afflicted Ulūka
with nine arrows,
Śakuni with sixtyfour,
and with three arrows each,
he wounded their
wheel-protectors.

31 Infuriated by the deadly
oil-dipped *nārāca*-arrows of Bhīma,
the Kauravas
targeted Sahadeva
with a veritable hail
of arrows –

32 Like lightning and rain-storm
assailing a mountain.
Undaunted,
illustrious and brave
Sahadeva
faced his enemy,

33 And, mahārāja,
with a *bhalla*-arrow,
he sliced Ulūka's head
from his body.
Killed by Sahadeva,
Ulūka fell from his chariot,

34 His body dripping blood,
to the greal delight
of the Pāṇḍavas.
O Bharata descendant!
The sight of his son slain
made Śakuni

35 Dry-throated,
choking with suppressed tears.
Sighing heavily,
he recalled Kṣatta-Vidura's words.
He broke into tears.
He was lost in thought.

36 Mahārāja! He attacked Sahadeva
with three arrows.
Sahadeva succeeded
in repulsing those arrows
with a counter-volley
of his own

37 Which, mahārāja, splintered
the bow of Śakuni.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Discarding
his smashed bow,
Subala's son Śakuni

38 Picked up a massive sword
and hurled it
straight at Sahadeva.
O lord of the world!
Seeing that dreadful sword
speeding towards him,

39 Sahadeva smiled,
and sliced in two
the weapon of Subala's son.
His sword shattered,
Śakuni hurled
a massive mace

40 At Sahadeva.
It dropped harmlessly on the ground.
Picking up
a śakti-spear
resembling
the doomsday night of Kāla,

41 Subala's son Śakuni,
livid with rage,
hurled it at Pāṇḍava Sahadeva.
Targeting
that speeding weapon
with gold-filigreed arrows,

42 Sahadeva smiled,
and sliced it
in three pieces.
The three fragments
of the gold-filigreed lance
fell on the earth

43 Like flashing lightning
sweeping down
from the sky.
Seeing the lance sundered,
and fear gripping
Subala's son Śakuni,

44 Your soldiers panicked
and fled.
Śakuni fled also.
Flushed with victory,
the Pāṇḍavas screamed
their war-cries.

45 As for your sons' army,
almost all the warriors
had fled.
Seeing them demoralised,
the illustrious son of Mādrī,
Sahadeva,

46 Afflicted them
on the field of battle
with a deluge
of hundreds of arrows.
Though he was protected
by splendid Gāndhāra horses,

47 And bent on victory,
Saubala-Śakuni was again
attacked by Sahadeva.
O king,
treating Śakuni as his share
of those to be killed,

48 Sahadeva,
in his gold-ornamented chariot,
pursued him relentlessly.
Pulling taut
the string
of a massive bow,

49 And fitting a vulture-feathered,
stone-sharpened shaft,
he released it,
as if piercing a huge elephant
with an iron hook,
and wounded Śakuni.

50 Percipient Sahadeva
said to him,
as if reminding him of something:
"Be a man!
Stand firm on Kṣatriya dharma –
and fight!

51 You wicked-minded fool!
You were delighted,
were you not, in the sabhā,
playing the dice game?
The time has come at last
to pay the price!

52 They are dead, all of them,
the wicked-ātmaned ones
who mocked us then.
Only Duryodhana,
that family disgrace,
and you, his maternal uncle, are here.

53 Like fruit plucked
from a tree
with a merciless stick,
I will slice
your head today
with a razor-arrow."

54 Mahārāja! Saying this,
infuriated Sahadeva
speedily attacked Śakuni;
he was like
a mahā-powerful lion
on a killing-rampage.

55 Decidedly-difficult-to-defeat
as a warrior
was Sahadeva.
Burning with anger,
he pulled taut his bowstring
with all his force,

56 Targeted Śakuni
with ten arrows,
wounded his horses with four,
and, shredding his umbrella,
flag, and bow,
roared his war-cry.

57 After destroying his flag,
umbrella and bow,
Sahadeva targeted
and wounded all
the vulnerable parts
of Śakuni's body.

58 And then, mahārāja,
illustrious Sahadeva continued
assailing Śakuni with showers
of unrepulsable arrows.

59 Very incensed
was Subala's son Śakuni.
He made up his mind
to kill Mādrī's son Sahadeva
with a gold-filigreed
prāsa-lance,
and he attacked swiftly.

60 Mādrī's son Sahadeva
targeted Śakuni's
uplifted *prāsa*-lance
and his well-shaped arms.
Slicing all three
with three *bhalla*-arrows,
he roared his war-cry.

61 A single *bhalla*-arrow
crafted of iron;
with feathers of gold;
designed to pierce
impenetrable armour;
taking perfect aim,
Sahadeva with it
decapitated Śakuni,
and roared his war-cry.

62 That gold-filigreed shaft
dazzled like the sun;
it was perfectly aimed.
Struck by that arrow
on the field of battle,
Śakuni's body,
shorn of its head,
toppled and fell
with a thud on the ground.

63 Driven by anger,
Pāṇḍu's son Sahadeva
selected an arrow
sharpened on stone
and feathered with gold
and with it he sliced
the head of Śakuni,
the root cause
of all Kaurava injustice.

64 O rājā! When Sahadeva
targeted and sliced
the well-shaped arms
of his enemy Śakuni,
the blood-drenched body
fell on the ground
of the field of battle,
and was seen writhing
and twitching convulsively.

65 Seeing Śakuni headless
and bathed in blood
sprawled on the ground,
your soldiers, horrified,
overcome by fear,
lost their senses,
and taking their weapons
with them, they fled
in all directions.

66 Their mouths were dry,
their minds paralysed.
The twang of the Gāṇḍīva
made them urinate.
Their chariots and horses
and elephants were destroyed.
So terrified were they,
they fled on foot.
Duryodhana was with them.

[IX:28:67-68; 29:1-3]

Transcreated by P. Lal

67 O Bharata descendant!
With Śakuni removed,
toppled from his chariot,
Krishna and the Pāṇḍavas
were hugely delighted,
and passed their exultation
to their army warriors
by happily blowing
their victorious conches.

68 All who saw Sahadeva
on the field of battle
gave him appropriate
pūjā-respect, saying:
"Fate-favoured are we
that you, O hero,
have killed the mahātmā
of wickedness, along
with his son Ulūka."

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 Śakuni's followers, mahārāja
(continued Sañjaya), angrily
gave up love of life and surrounded
the Pāṇḍavas in the fierce war.

2 To consolidate Sahadeva's victory,
Arjuna faced them, reinforced
by formidable Bhīma, whose anger
was like that of a venomous snake.

3 They were armed with spears
and swords and lances;
their mission was
to kill Sahadeva;
but Gāṇḍīva-wielding Dhanañjaya-
Arjuna frustrated them.

4 With volleys of *bhalla*-arrows,
dreadful-deed-doer
Bibhatsu-Arjuna sliced
their heavily weaponed arms,
severed their heads,
and slaughtered their horses.

5 Fatally assaulted
by the roaming-at-will
ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
those world-famed warriors
and their horses
collapsed on the field.

6 Wathching the massacre of his warriors,
Duryodhana
seethed with rage.
Summoning many
of the surviving
chariot-heroes,

7 Elephant-warriors and horsemen,
as well as
foot-soldiers,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
Duryodhana
said to them:

8 "Unite,
storm the field,
kill swiftly the Pāṇḍavas
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and his soldiers –
and return."

9 Respectfully obeying the order
of your son,
those difficult-to-defeat-in-battle
warriors
marched to the field
to fulfil their objective.

[IX:29:10-15]

Transcreated by P. Lal

10 As these Kaurava survivors
swiftly advanced
on the mahā-battlefield,
the Pāṇḍavas
let loose a deluge
of poison-tipped snake-like arrows.

11 O finest of the Bharatas!
It did not take long
for the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
to exterminate them;
they had no reinforcements
to protect them.

12 They had donned armour all right,
but it was fear
that spelled their doom.
Dust raised by horses' hooves
and fighting soldiers
obscured the battlefield.

13 Impossible to tell the directions
from the sub-directions
in the thick haze.
A Pāṇḍava detachment
slipped
out of the army ranks,

14 Attacked your soldiers,
O descendant of Bharata,
and swiftly killed them all.
All dead.
Not a single survivor,
O Bharata descendant.

15 Prabhu! Lord!
O Bharata descendant!
Your son had all of
eleven *akṣauhiṇīs*.
The Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas
slaughtered them all.

16 O rājā!
Of all those hundreds
of mahātmā rājās,
only one, Duryodhana,
survived – and he too,
grievously wounded.

17 All the directions,
the entire earth,
were now as nothing to him.
Not one of his warriors with him.
On the field
he saw the Pāṇḍavas

18 Celebrating their success
with victory shouts,
and he heard the whistle
of arrows
shot
by the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,

19 And the heart of Duryodhana.
was filled
with inconsolable grief,
mahārāja.
All alone. No soldier. No vehicle.
He wanted to escape.

20 "Tell me, Sūta,"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"they massacred my army,
they emptied my camps;
how much was left
of the Pāṇḍava army?

21 You are such a skilful narrator,
Sañjaya –
which is why I ask.
And tell me also –
what did he do,
my foolish son Duryodhana,

22 That lord of the earth,
when he saw his army butchered –
and he, all alone?"
Sañjaya replied:
Two thousand chariots,
seven thousand elephants,

23 Five thousand horses
and ten thousand foot-soldiers
were all that remained,
O rājā,
of the mahā-fighting-force
of the Pāṇḍavas.

24 Commanding them,
on one side of the field,
was Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
And, on the other side,
O finest of the Bharatas,
all alone, Duryodhana.

25 When the incomparable
chariot-hero Duryodhana,
all alone, his army massacred,
heard the Pāṇḍavas
noisily celebrating
on the battlefield,

26 Then, mahārāja,
that lord of the earth,
leaving behind his horse,
turned his face
eastwards,
and fled the battlefield.

27 Lord of eleven *akṣauhiṇīs*,
your son Duryodhana,
your formidable son,
carrying his mace,
all alone, on foot,
made his way to the lake.

28 He had not walked
all that far,
that lord of men,
when he recalled
the words of wise,
serene-in-dharma Kṣatta-Vidura.

29 And it occurred to him:
Surely mahā-wise Vidura
must have foreseen
and known in advance
this carnage
of the Kṣatriyas.

30 O rājā!
This thought filled
the heart of Duryodhana
with sadness and pain.
King Duryodhana decided
to go to the lake.

31 You will recall, mahārāja,
that infuriated
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and the Pāṇḍava allies
had attacked your army,
O rājā,

32 A roaring army brandishing
śakti-spears, *ṛṣṭi*-swords
and *prāsa*-lances, an army
whom Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
had devastated
with his Gāṇḍīva bow.

33 How glorious he looked –
Arjuna standing erect
in his white-horsed chariot
after slaughtering
friends and relatives and ministers
with his sharp arrows.

34 With the destruction
of Subala's son Śakuni
and his horses, chariots
and elephants,
your army looked
like a defoliated forest.

35 In Duryodhana's army
of hundreds of thousands,
not one of these
mahā-chariot-heroes
was now alive,
O rājā:

36 Droṇa's valiant son Aśvatthāman,
Kaṛtavarman,
Kṛpa of the Gautamas.
Only one king was left,
O rājā:
your son Duryodhana.

37 Seeing me captive,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna laughed
and said to Sātyaki:
"About this prisoner –
what good is he to us
alive?"

38 Hardly had Dhṛṣṭadyumna
finished speaking
than Śini's grandson
mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki
raised high his sword
to cut me down.

39 Suddenly mahā-wise
Born-on-an-island
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa
appeared and said:
"Leave Sañjaya alone!
He must not be killed."

40 Śini's grandson Sātyaki
joined his palms in *añjali*
before Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.
Setting me free, he said:
"*Svasti*! May you fare well.
Do as you wish, Sañjaya."

41 With his permission
I removed my armour
and laid aside my weapons.
That evening
I left for the city.
I was bleeding all over.

42 O rājā! I had covered
no more than a *krośa*
when I saw Duryodhana
standing alone,
badly wounded,
mace in hand.

43 He saw me, and his eyes
filled with tears.
He did not look straight at me.
I stood there quietly.
He kept looking at me
sideways.

44 I too seeing him all alone
was overcome
by grief.
I stood there
for quite some time
without saying a word.

45 For whom thousands
of lustrally anointed
and crown-decorated kings
brought gifts,
and who accepted the homage
of each of them;

46 For whom the unique hero
  Karṇa
in the not-so-distant past
  brought tribute
from this four-ocean-surrounded,
  gem-laden earth;

47 Whose sovereign power
  Karṇa established
over so many kingdoms;
  the rājā who never
needed war-weapons
  to justify his authority;

48 Who from Hatināpura
  ruled the subjects
of his thorn-free kingdom;
  whose splendour
exceeded the splendour
  of even Kubera;

49 O lord of the earth,
  O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
for whom a golden path
  was made to move
from mansion to mansion,
  or to a god-abode;

50 Who rode an elephant
  as divinely magnificent
as Indra's Airāvata
  and looked resplendent,
and was himself
  as valiant as Indra; –

51 Seeing that Indra-like
  radiant Duryodhana,
grievously wounded,
  standing all alone
on five footsteps of land,
  I was appalled.

52 Seeing such a king,
such a lord of the world,
such a Jagannātha,
reduced to such misfortune,
what can one say except
"Destiny is all-powerful"?

53 Quickly I told him
the story
of my capture,
and my release
by the grace
of Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.

54 He was silent for a while,
lost in thought.
Then he asked me
about his brothers
and the fate
of his army.

55 I told him all
that I had witnessed
with my own eyes:
"Your brothers
have all been killed,
your army massacred.

56 O ruler of men!
Before I left,
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
informed me,
'Only three of your chariot-heroes
have survived.'"

57 When he heard this,
he sighed heavily
and kept on sighing;
then he looked at me,
touched me,
and said to me:

58 "No one but you, Sañjaya,
has survived this war.
I don't see
any second person.
The Pāṇḍavas –
their well-wishers are all alive.

59 Sañjaya, tell the wisdom-eyed rājā
my father,
'Your son Duryodhana
is alive
and is hiding
inside a lake.

60 He has no friends,
he has no sons, no brothers.
The Pāṇḍavas
have taken his kingdom.
What point is there
in living any more?

61 Tell him all this,
and tell him further,
'He has survived
the mahā-carnage,
and suverely wounded,
he is hiding in a lake.' "

62 This is what he said to me,
mahārāja,
and then, that lord-of-men,
using his powers of māyā,
slipped inside
the waters of the lake.

63 The waters closed over him.
I stood there alone,
and I saw three mahā-chariot-heroes
approach.
Their horses
were utterly exhausted.

64 Śaradvata's son Kṛpa
the valiant warrior;
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
finest of chariot-heroes;
and Kṛtavarman of the Bhojas –
all three bleeding from arrow wounds.

65 Seeing me,
they spurred their horses,
came up to me
and said:
"Sañjaya! How fortunate
you are alive!"

66 Then they asked me
about your son,
ruler-of-men Duryodhana:
"Tell us, Sañjaya:
is rājā Duryodhana
still alive?"

67 I told them the king
was alive,
and I repeated to them
all that
Duryodhana had said
to me.

68 I also pointed out to them
the lake
where ruler-of-men Duryodhana
had hidden himself
O rājā!
Aśvatthāman heard what I said,

69 And looked in the direction
of the large lake.
Pitifully he said to me:
"Aho! *Dhik!* Shame on us –
our ruler does not know
we are alive.

70 We are ready to join him
and carry on the fight
against our enemies."
For a long time
the three mahā-chariot-heroes
lamented their plight.

71 Then, seeing the sons of Pāṇḍu
approaching in the distance,
the excellent chariot-heroes left.
Seating me
in the well-equipped chariot
of Kṛpa,

72 The three last survivors
of the war
drove me to the camp.
The sun was setting.
The guards of the camp
were trembling with fear.

73 When they heard of the deaths
of your sons,
they wept uncontrollably.
Mahārāja!
The old men,
deputed to protect the women,

74 Took the royal ladies with them,
and prepared
to leave for the city.
On all sides
rose the clamour
of loud lamentation,

75 A mahā-cacophony
of wailing
when the royal ladies heard,
O rājā,
of the massacre
of the Kaurava army.

76 The earth echoed
with the sad wailing,
like that of *kurarī*-ospreys.
They scratched their faces
with nails,
they beat their heads,

77 They struck their breasts,
and loosened their braids,
and moaned incessantly.
The sky reverberated
with their repeated cries
of "Hai! Hai!"

78 O lord of the world!
Sobbing and weeping,
they bared their grief.
The throats
of the courtiers of Duryodhana
choked with pity

79 As they accompanied
the wives of the rājās
to the city.
O lord of the world!
The guards carried cane-sticks
in their hands.

80 The attendants protecting
the royal ladies
took with them
expensive and luxurious beds
as they proceeded
to the city.

81 Others of the court,
responsible for the protection
of women, placed their wives
in carts pulled by mules,
and proceeded in the direction
of the city.

82 Mahārāja! Ladies of the palace,
whom even the sun
had never seen,
were now seen
by the common populace,
on their way to the city.

83 O finest of the Bharatas!
Young girls,
who had lost their relatives
and dear ones,
walked with slow steps
on their way to the city.

84 Fear of Bhīma
drove even shepherds
and cowherds
to make their way
to the safety
of the city.

85 They were stricken
with mortal fear
of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons.
They kept staring
at each other
as they proceeded.

86 At the time of that
panic-stricken exodus,
Yuyutsu,
a victim of profound grief,
wondered
what he should do.

87 "The fearfully valiant Pāṇḍavas
have wiped out
eleven *akṣauhiṇīs*
under the command of Duryodhana,
and massacred the brothers
of Duryodhana also.

88 All under the command
of Bhīṣma and Droṇa
are dead.
The Kauravas are all dead.
I am the only lucky one
to have survived.

89 The tent inmates have fled,
all of them.
With their masters dead,
the helpless dependants
are fleeing
helter-skelter.

90 Never have they suffered
as they are suffering
now.
Fear haunts their eyes.
Like frightened deer,
they are staring at the directions.

91 The surviving advisors
of Duryodhana
have fled to the city,
taking all
the palace ladies
with them.

92 I think it's best for me
if I take
the permission of Yudhiṣṭhira
and Vasudeva's son Krishna,
and also
go to the city."

93 Strong-armed Yuyutsu
asked permission
from both of them.
His request
pleased
the always compassionate,

94 Strong-armed rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
Embracing the Vaiśya woman's son,
he gave leave
to Yuyutsu,
who quickly mounted his chariot,
and drove off.

95 He also escorted the wives
of the rājās
to the city.
The sun was about to set
when,
with all of them,

96 He entered Hastināpura.
His throat was dry,
there were tears in his eyes.
There he saw
mahā-wise Vidura, who
also had tears in his eyes,

97 Who had just been with you,
O rājā, and whose mind
was heavy with sorrow.
Firm-in-truth Vidura
praṇama-ed Yuyutsu
and said:

98 "It is your good luck, my son,
that you have survived
the Kuru-carnage.
But how have you managed
to come here
before rājā Duryodhana?

99 Explain that to me
in exact detail."
Yuyutsu replied:
"All friends, brothers,
and son of Śakuni dead,
Śakuni dead too,

100 Rājā Duryodhana,
all whose remaining
brothers had died too,
mounted his horse,
left the battlefield,
and fled east.

101 With the king leaving
his camp
and fleeing far away,
the frightened subjects
made their way
to the capital.

102 Ensuring the safety
of the rājā's and his
brothers' wives
in various vehicles,
the fearful royal guards
also fled.

103 With the permission
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and Keśava-Krishna,
I escorted the people
who were fleeing
to safe Hastināpura."

104 Appreciating the explanation
of the Vaiśya mother's son
Yuyutsu,
timely-action-conscious,
well-versed-in-all-dharmas
Vidura

105 Offered pūjā-respect
to Yuyutsu
and said to him:
"You have been
timely-action-conscious
in the Kuru-carnage;

106

With your compassion
you have protected
family-dharma.
Surviving that carnage of heroes,
to the capital
has your good fortune

107

Safely brought you.
We welcome you
like people welcoming the sun
at daybreak. To the blind,
selfish king with no foresight,
you are like a crutch.

108

So many times I warned him
to stop the war.
But fate sapped his will.
He is in deep distress now,
my son. You are the one
who must help him now.

109

Take rest here today.
Tomorrow meet Yudhiṣṭhira."
Saying this,
Vidura,
his eyes
brimming with tears,

110

Took Yuyutsu with him
to the palace.
Sounds of deep lamentation
could be heard
from the palace inmates,
citizens and others.

111

No joy here,
no glory,
no solace.
Desolate like a forsaken garden.
Grieving Vidura
grieved even more.

112 O rājā! Well-versed-
in-all-dharmas Vidura
stayed in the city
with a grieving ātman,
sighing long sighs
again and again.

113 Yuyutsu spent the night
in his home.
His mind was very uneasy;
all the praise
he received brought him
no delight.

114 He kept thinking
of the horrible war
that engulfed
the two Bhārata armies.

SECTION THIRTY

1 Dhṛtarāṣtra asked: "Sañjaya!
The sons of Pāṇḍu
wiped out my army.
What happened to the few survivors?

2 Kṛtavarman, Kṛpa,
Droṇa's valiant son Aśvatthāman,
and bad-ātmaned Duryodhana –
What did they do?"

3 Sañjaya replied:
With the departure
of the wives of the mahātmā Kṣatriyas,
the camp emptied.
This deeply depressed
the three chariot-heroes.

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4 That evening they heard
the victory cries
of Pāṇḍu's sons,
and saw the camp unpeopled.
Desiring the welfare
of rājā Duryodhana,

5 Displeased with the place
where they stood,
they made their way to the lake.
In the meantime,
Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers,

6 O rājā, were joyfully scouring
the field
to find and kill Duryodhana.
Flaming with anger,
seeking total victory,
they searched for your son,

7 But despite their best efforts
they found no trace
of ruler-of-men Duryodhana.
Mace in hand,
he had run as fast
as he could

8 To the lake, stilled its waters
with his māyā
and made himself safe
in them.
The Pāṇḍavas searched
till their horses were exhausted,

9 So they returned,
and rested with their soldiers
in their camp.
Kṛpa, Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman,
and Kṛtavarman
of the Sātvatas

10 Proceeded to the lake
while Pṛtha-Kuntī's sons
were resting in their camp.
Reaching the lake
in whose waters ruler-of-men
Duryodhana lay asleep,

11 They called out
to the difficult-to-defeat
relaxing rājā:
"O rājā! Rise!
Come with us,
and fight Yudhiṣṭhira!

12 Win – and enjoy the world!
Die –
and enjoy heaven!
You have destroyed
most of their army,
Duryodhana!

13 O lord of the world!
Mangled and mutilated
are those that remain
in their army.
They will collapse
if you attack them now,

14 With our assistance.
O Bharata descendant, stand up!"
"How fortunate,"
said Duryodhana,
"to see you have survived
the man-massacring

15 Pāṇḍava-Kaurava bloodbath,
O bull-brave heroes!
Let us rest
and recover first
before we think
of victory.

16 You are tired out,
and I am badly wounded.
The Pāṇḍavas are still
a growing and powerful force.
I do not think this
is the right time to fight.

17 Not surprising, O heroes,
that you are so eager to fight.
Your great bhakti for me
I respect.
But this is not the time
to show how brave you are.

18 Let us spend this night here.
Tomorrow at daybreak
I will go with you,
and together
we will attack the enemy.
I give you my word."

19 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman replied
to difficult-to-defeat-in-battle
rājā Duryodhana:
"Rise, O rājā! May you prosper!
Victory will be ours.

20 I vow here and now –
by the merits of my rituals,
my gifts, by truth,
by my *japa*-meditations,
I will today wipe out
all the Somakas.

21 Let me never feel the joy
of a yajña-performer
which every good man deserves,
if, after night passes
and day dawns,
I fail to slaughter my enemies.

22 O ruler of men! O radiant lord!
Listen to me!
I tell you this truly –
I will not remove my armour
till I have slaughtered
all the Pāñcālas."

23 While he was speaking,
some hunters,
fatigued by the weight of the kill
they were carrying,
arrived there without warning
to quench their thirst.

24 They used to come there,
mahārāja, radiant lord,
regularly, and take back
baskets of meat
for Bhīma, for whom
they had profound bhakti.

25 Unnoticed, they heard every word
of the conversation
that took place
near the lake.
They heard everything
Duryodhana said.

26 Kaurava Duryodhana
did not want to fight,
but the other mahā-bowman,
driven by desire for battle,
kept urging him
to fight.

27 Hearing the aggressive words
of the Kaurava
mahā-chariot-heroes,
and realising
that rājā Duryodhana
was reluctant to fight,

28 Which was clear from the exchange
between the three
and the rājā in the lake,
the hunters, O Indra-among-rājās,
concluded:
"Suyodhana-Duryodhana is in the lake."

29 Some time back,
when Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
was searching for Duryodhana,
he had come upon these hunters,
and asked them
about your son.

30 O rājā!
They recalled the words
of Pāṇḍu's son,
and they began
whispering slowly
among themselves:

31 "If we tell him
where Duryodhana is hiding,
he will reward us.
It's clear
the famous king Duryodhana
is hiding in the lake.

32 So why not we go
and inform
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
that revengeful Duryodhana
is sleeping
in the lake?

33 We might as well
tell the wise
bow-expert Bhīma also
that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
is sleeping
in the lake.

34 This will please him,
and we'll be rich!
Why should we remain useless
dried-up creatures
carrying meat
from place to place?"

35 Saying this,
lured by hopes of riches,
the hunters
with their baskets of meat
hurried
to the Pāṇḍava camp.

36 Mahārāja!
The brilliant-in-battle Pāṇḍavas
knew what they wanted;
but not finding Duryodhana
anywhere
on the battlefield,

37 Yet determined to take revenge
on that scoundrel
for his deceitful deeds,
they had despatched spies
everywhere
to keep them informed.

38 The armed spies
returned and told
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira:
"King Duryodhana
is nowhere
to be found."

39 O bull-brave Bharata!
This piece of information
plunged earth-lord Yudhiṣṭhira
in deep gloom;
he was lost in thought,
heaving heavy sighs.

40 O bull-brave Bharata!
O radiant lord!
The Pāṇḍavas were sitting
hope-bereft, depressed,
when they suddenly
turned up –

41 At the camp – the hunters
who had seen
king Duryodhana.
Overjoyed, they pushed
their way in,
and stood facing Bhīma.

42 To the mahā-powerful
Pāṇḍava Bhīma
they reported every detail
of what
they had seen and heard
at the lake.

43 O rājā! Foe-exterminator
wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
rewarded them handsomely,
and informed
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira:

44 "O rājā! My hunters
have discovered Duryodhana!
He's hiding
in the māyā-waters
of the lake,
the man who so troubles you."

45 O lord of the world!
These words of Bhīma
delighted Kuntī's son
the one-without-an-enemy
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers.

46 Learning that mahā-bowman Duryodhana
 was hiding
in the waters of the lake,
 Yudhiṣṭhira,
led by punisher-of-people Janārdana-Krishna,
 hurried to the spot.

47 O lord of the world!
 The exultant shouts
of the Pāṇḍavas
 and the Pāñcālas
reverberated
 in all the directions.

48 O bull-brave Bhrata!
 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Shouting their lion-cries of victory,
 the Kṣatriyas
then quickly proceeded
 to Lake Dvaipāyana.

49 Rejoicing wildly,
 the Somaka warriors
shouted all over
 the battlefield:
"We've found him –
 the wicked son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra!"

50 O lord of the earth!
 The rattle
of their speeding chariots
 filled the sky
with its fierce
 tumultuous echoes.

51 Despite the fact that their horses
 were exhausted,
their determination
 to find Duryodhana
made them speedily follow
 rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

52 Arjuna, Bhīma,
Mādrī and Pāṇḍu's twin sons
Nakula and Sahadeva,
the Pāñcāla prince
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the never-defeated Śikhaṇḍin,

53 Uttamaujas, Yudhāmanyu,
the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki,
the five sons
of Draupadī,
and the Pāñcāla survivors,
O descendant of Bharata,

54 And all their horses
and elephants
and thousands of foot-soldiers.
Mahārāja!
Soon enough,
valiant Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

55 Reached the awesome
Lake Dvaipāyana
where Duryodhana lay hidden.
Cool and transparent
its waters,
as vast as an ocean . . .

56 Concealed in its depths
by the power of his māyā
lay your son,
O descendant of Bharata,
as ordained by the wonderful yoga
of his fate.

57 O ruler of men!
Prabhu! Lord!
Mace in hand,
he lay immersed in the waters.
It was difficult for human eyes
to spot him.

58 Concealed in the waters,
rājā Duryodhana
heard the roaring shouts
of his enemies
reverberating
like rain-clouds.

59 O Indra-among-rājās!
Mahārāja!
Bent on killing your son,
Yudhiṣṭhira
and his followers
arrived at the lake.

60 With blaring conches
and thundering chariots,
raising mahā-swirls
of dust,
and shaking the earth,
they came.

61 Hearing the cacophony
of Yudhiṣṭhira's army,
the mahā-chariot-heroes,
Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman
and Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
said to rājā Duryodhana:

62 "Swollen with joy
and thirsting for victory,
the Pāṇḍavas are coming here.
It is best
that we leave this place.
Tell us what to do."

63 Prabhu! Lord!
Duryodhana said
to those formidable warriors,
"*Tatheti*! So be it!",
and with his māyā
he again congealed the waters.

64 Mahārāja!
Abiding by the rājā's word,
Kṛpa and the other
mahā-chariot-heroes left,
and went
to a faraway place.

65 O respect-worthy monarch!
There they saw
a *nyagrodha*-banyan and,
exhausted and depressed,
they took shelter
and rested under it.

66 In the meantime,
the mahā-powerful son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
covered himself
under the waters.
The Pāṇḍavas arrived,
ready for battle.

67 "What kind of battle
will he fight?
What will happen to our rājā?
How will the Pāṇḍavas find out
where our Kaurava king
is hiding?"

68 Thinking of all this,
O rājā,
Kṛpa and the others
unyoked the horses
from their chariots,
and sat down under the tree.

SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 The three chariot-heroes had left
(continued Sañjaya),
when the Pāṇḍavas came to the lake
where Duryodhana lay hidden.

2 They arrived at Lake Dvaipāyana,
O finest of the Kauravas.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
had stilled
the rippling waves
of that vast body of water.

3 Enhancer-of-Kaurava-joy
Kuru-nandana Yudhiṣṭhira
said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:
"Look at the way
Duryodhana has charmed the lake
with his māyā!

4 He is lying inside the waters.
No human
can harm him there.
His māyā
has ensured his safety
in the lake.

5 He is a master of trickery,
no doubt of that.
But he will not escape me.
Even if thunderbolt-wielding Indra
were to come
and fight for him,

6 The world, O Mādhava-Krishna,
will see him
die at my hands today."
"O Bharata descendant!"
said Vāsudeva-Krishna.
"The māyā of māyā-working Duryodhana

7 Can be dispelled only
by a counter-māyā of your own.
Yudhiṣṭhira!
That is the truth.
Use all your many māyās,
plunge in the lake,

8 O finest of the Bharatas,
and finish off
māyā-ātmaned Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
Indra used his wonder-working skills
to destroy
the Daityas and Danavas,

9 Mahātmā Hari killed Bali
with the help
of his wonder-working skills,
and he employed the same
wonder-working skills
to kill the mahā-antigod Hiraṇyākṣa.

10 Hiraṇyākaśipu was also killed
by the same
wonder-working skills.
And Vṛtra, O rājā,
was killed
by them also.

11 O rājā! Rāvaṇa the rākṣasa,
of Pulastya lineage,
and all his relatives
and followers
were killed
by Rāma

12 With wonder-working yoga.
That is the way
you should work your valour.
O rājā! In the past,
wonder-working skills
were used to kill

13 The mahā-antigod,
the Daitya Tāraka,
and valiant Vipracitti.
Vibho! O radiant lord!
Vātāpi and Ilvala
and Triśirā

14

And the antigods
Sunda and Upasunda
were victims of wonder-working skills.
O radiant one!
Indra enjoys heaven
with wonder-working skills.

15

Only wonder-working works,
O rājā, nothing else.
Yudhiṣṭhira!
Daitya and Dānava antigods,
rākṣasas,
and many earth-rulers

16

Were killed by wonder-working skills.
You also
should make use of them."
Strict-vowed Yudhiṣṭhira
(said Sañjaya) heard the advice
of Vāsudeva-Krishna,

17

And he smiled, mahārāja,
and to your mahā-powerful son
hiding in the lake,
O Bharata descendant,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
said:

18

"O lord of the world!
Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
Saving your skin in the waters,
are you,
after getting all the Kṣatriyas
and your relatives killed?

19

What's the use of your skulking
in these waters?
O rājā
Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
Come out!
Stand up and fight us!

20 O rājā!
O finest of men!
Where's your pride
and manliness? –
hiding in these magic waters,
are they?

21 How brave you are! –
that's what they said
about you in the sabhā.
What kind of bravery is this
that cowers
in the waters of a lake?

22 Stand up, rājā!
Fight!
You are a noble-born Kṣatriya!
Of Kaurava lineage!
Think of the family
that gave you birth!

23 You were born a Kaurava.
You were proud
to be a Kaurava.
How is it then
that afraid to fight
you lurk in these waters?

24 O rājā! Is it Sanātana Dharma
to waver in battle
and panic and run?
The ignoble do this.
Tāta! Dear one!
It does not get them heaven.

25 How is it you ran away
before the battle ended?
You wanted victory, didn't you?
Ensuring the deaths
of sons, brothers,
consins, fathers,

26 Friends, maternal uncles,
and allies –
seeing them die –
how could you slink for safety
in the waters
of this lake?

27 O Bharata descendant!
You are not brave.
You think you are brave.
Scoundrel!
'I am brave,' you say.
Liar!

28 Real heroes don't run away
from their enemies.
Yours must be
a special heroism.
Tell me all
about it.

29 Or else, stand up,
be fearless, and fight!
Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
After causing the deaths
of your brothers
and your soldiers,

30 How can saving
your own skin
be an act of dharma?
Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
This is not the dharma
of a Kṣatriya.

31 You relied so much on Karṇa
and on Subala's son
Śakuni
that you started thinking
of yourself
as superhuman.

32 Such gross wickedness!
Very well –
so why don't you fight now?
O Bharata descendant!
Stand up! Fight!
You are a fool to run away.

33 Where is your manliness,
Suyodhana-Duryodhana?
Where is your self-respect?
Where now is your valour?
Where your bluff and bluster
and boasting?

34 Where is your vaunted skill
in war-weapons?
Why are you lurking
in this lake?
O Bharata descendant! Rise! Fight!
Show your Kṣatriya-dharma.

35 Wipe us all out,
O Bharata descendant,
and rule the earth.
Or die at our hands,
and sleep forever
on the battlefield.

36 The Mahātmā Creator
has laid down this
as your primary dharma.
O mahā-chariot-hero!
Do what is expected
of a rājā."

37 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya)
From inside
the waters of the lake,
your son replied
to percipient
Dharmaputra-Yudhiṣṭhira:

38 “It is not surprising, mahārāja,
  that all creatures
experience fear.
  But it is not fear of creatures,
O Bharata dexcendant,
  that has brought me here.

39 I have no chariot, no quiver.
  My chariot-wheel protectors
are dead.
  My army is wiped out.
I am all alone. I came here
  to rest and recover.

40 O lord of the world!
  I am not in this lake
to save my skin,
  not out of fear, nor despair.
I am here
  because I am exhausted.

41 Son of Kuntī!
  You also need rest.
So do your soldiers.
  Do so –
and then I will come out
  and fight you all.”

42 “Suyodhana-Duryodhana!”
  said Yudhiṣṭhira.
“We have rested enough,
  and searched a long time for you.
So rise –
  and fight!

43 Kill all us Pārtha-Pāṇḍavas
  and rule the kingdom,
or get killed by us
  and go to the realm
that is reserved
  for dead heroes.”

44 Duryodhana replied:
"O Kaurava descendant!
O lord of men!
My Kaurava brothers
for whom I wanted this kingdom
are all dead.

45 All the bull-brave Kṣatriyas
of this world
have been massacred.
The earth is now like a widow –
I have no desire
to enjoy her.

46 O bull-brave Bharata!
Yudhiṣṭhira!
I still hope to defeat you,
and smash the pride
of the Pāñcālas
and the Pāṇḍavas

47 But what use is fighting
when Droṇa
is dead,
and so is Karṇa,
and Pitāmaha Bhīṣma
dead too?

48 O rājā!
I give this empty earth to you.
She is all yours.
Which rājā wants
a kingdom
with no one in it?

49 With well-wishers, friends,
brothers, fathers all dead,
and the kingdom
appropriated by you,
why should I want
to live at all?

50 O descendant of Bharata!
I'll wear deerskin
and go to the forest.
With all my people dead,
I have no love at all
for this kingdom.

51 O rājā! I give you this earth,
where lie dead
my brothers, friends,
horses, elephants, all.
Take her. Feel free.
Enjoy her.

52 As for me, my radiant lord,
wearing two deerskins,
I will go to the forest.
I have no friends.
I have no interest in life
any more.

53 O Indra-among-rājās!
Go,
enjoy this husband-less earth,
without wealth and warriors.
Be happy
with this pathetic, life-less girl."

54 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
Mahā-renowned Yudhiṣṭhira
heard these words,
these pitiful words,
of your water-protected son Duryodhana,
and said:

55 "Stop mouthing
raving rubbish
from the safety of your lake!
Tāta! Childish rājā!
You chitter-chatter like a bird.
I am not impressed.

56 It may be fine for you,
Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
to gift this earth to me,
but it is not fine for me
to rule an earth
I get from you as a gift.

57 It would be adharma, O rājā,
for me to take this gift
from you.
It is not dharma
for a Kṣatriya
to accept gifts.

58 And so, I cannot accept
this entire earth
as a gift from you,
but I will defeat you
and then
I will happily enjoy this earth.

59 You are no more now
the lord of this earth;
how then can you give it to me?
O rājā!
Why did you not give
the earth to us

60 When for the sake of family peace,
abiding by dharma,
we asked for our share?
O rājā!
When mahā-powerful Vārṣṇeya-Krishna
asked, you refused.

61 Why the unseemly hurry
to give it to us now?
Have you lost your senses?
Show me a rājā
who briskly hands over his kingdom
to an attacking enemy.

62 O descendant of the Kauravas!
The truth is: you do not have the power
to give the earth,
nor the power to snatch it from anyone.
So why this eagerness
to give it to us?

63 O Bharata descendant!
Defeat me in battle,
and rule this earth.
Even that pinch of earth
that could be placed
on the tip of a needle –

64 Even that tiny bit
you were not prepared
to give to us earlier.
O lord of the earth!
Strange you should want today
to give us the entire earth!

65 Not even a needle tip then,
the whole earth now!
Having savoured the glory
and lordship
of the entire
bountiful earth,

66 What kind of fool is this
who will hand it over
to his enemies?
Your folly
has completely smothered
your commonsense.

67 Even if you give away the earth,
there is no way
you will escape with your life.
Make up your mind –
either defeat us
and rule the earth,

68 Or die at our hands
and go
to the wonderful other world.
O rājā!
If you live,
and I live,

69 The world will be confused:
Who won the war?
Whose was the victory?
Can't you see,
you wicked scoundrel,
your life is in my hands?

70 You live,
if I wish you to live;
you do not live if *you* wish it.
Remember how hard
you tried
to burn us alive?

71 How you tried to poison us
with snake-venom,
and drown us?
How, O rājā,
you snatched our kingdom
from us?

72 How you filthily abused
Draupadī
and dragged her by her hair?
For these reasons,
you will die, you scoundrel!
Your life is over.

73 Stand up!
And fight!
This is the best course
for you."
O lord of people!
In this way
the victorious Pāṇḍavas,
heroes all of them,
uttered these words
again and again.

SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 "My earth-lord son Duryodhana,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "was always
hot-tempered. How did he react when
Yudhiṣṭhira provoked him?

2 He had never in his life
been provoked like this.
He was a rājā, and everyone
respected him accordingly.

3 The shade of an umbrella,
the heat of the sun –
even these upset his self-
importance. Tell me,
how could he endure
such bitter insults?

4 Sañjaya, did you not see
with your own eyes
how even the Mlecchas
and forest tribals
depended on his grace
and goodwill?

5 He had no servants now,
no attendants,
he was all alone.
So, when he heard
the harsh reproaches
of the Pāṇḍavas,

6 He repeated insults
of his victorious enemies,
what did Duryodhana
say to the Pāṇḍavas?
This I want to hear
from you, Sañjaya."

7 O rājā!
O Indra-among-rājās!
When Yudhiṣṭhira and
his brothers spoke
so bitterly to your son
safe in the lake,

8 Such bitter words –
that ruler-of-men,
profoundly depressed
in his watery shelter,
kept sighing long sighs
again and again.

9 Your son Duryodhana slapped
the waters with
his hands again and again,
and made up
his mind to fight, and said
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

10 "All of you Pārtha-Pāṇḍavas
have come here with
friend, horses, elephants,
chariots. I am alone.
I have no chariot,
not even a single animal.

11 You are many. Your chariots
are loaded
with weapons and missiles.
How do you expect me,
alone, on foot, weaponless,
to fight you?

12 Fight me them singly,
one by one, Yudhiṣṭhira,
all of you. For many warriors
to fight one
is against the rules
of warfare.

13 It is against the rules
of war to fight
a warrior who is exhausted,
grievously wounded,
helpless, without armour, and
whose horse is tired.

14 O rājā! I am not afraid
of you, wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
Phālguna-Arjuna,
Vāsudeva-Krishna,
nor the Pāñcālas.

15 The twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki,
and all you soldiers –
I do not fear them.
Alone, I can angrily repulse
all of you.

16 O lord of men!
The root cause of the fame
of good men is dharma.
I respect dharma
and I respect fame –
and so I say what I say.

17 I will stand up
and I will fight you
one by one –
like the years
welcoming the seasons
one by one.

18 Attack me with your chariots
and horses and weapons!
I will destroy you without
a chariot! Like Savitā the sun
at night-death and day-break
making all the stars

19 Invisible with his effulgence.
O Pāṇḍavas,
wait and watch! I will free
myself today
of my debt to so many
illustrious Kṣatriyas:

20 Bāhlīka, Droṇa,
Bhīṣma, mahā-ātmaned Karṇa,
brave Jayadratha
and brave Bhagadatta,
both renowned
for their valour,

21 The Madra-rājā Śalya
and Bhūriśravas,
Subala's son Śakuni;
also,
O finest of the Bharatas,
sons,

22 Friends,
well-wishers,
and relatives,
and my brothers –
I will be freed
of my debts to them.

23 Saying this, ruler-of-men
Duryodhana kept silent.
Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"How lucky we are
Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
you know dharma so well!

24 O strong mahā-armed one!
How lucky we are
that you are eager to fight!
How lucky we are,
Kaurava, that you are brave
and know how to fight!

25 Splendid! So be it, then!
You will take us on
one by one on the battlefield.
Choose your weapon,
as you take as on
one by one.

26 One will fight –
the rest of us
will stand and watch.
O excellent hero!
I give you
my world:

27 'Kill anyone of us,
and the kingdom is yours.
Get killed, and heaven is yours.'
Duryodhana said:
"If that is so,
then select your hero.

28 The only weapon I have
is my mace.
Let the one
among you step forward
who thinks
he can kill me.

29 Let him come to the field
with his mace
and fight me.
We have seen
wonderful chariot-duels –
so many of them.

30 Let there be
this wonderful mace-duel
today.
Men like to fight
with different weapons
with different adversaries.

31 With your permission,
let the duel today
be with one weapon only
with the same adversary.
O mahā-muscled one! With my mace
I will defeat you, your brothers,

32 The Pāñcālas, the Sṛñjayas,
and all other warriors
that have come here.
Yudhiṣṭhira!
Even Śakra-Indra
cannot frighten me."

33 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"Son of Gāndhārī!
Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
Get up! Get up!
Fight me! You are strong.
With your mace, alone,

34 Show your prowess,
O Son of Gāndhārī,
fighting us one by one.
Even if Indra
comes to help you,
you will not survive today."

35 Your lion-among-men son
(continued Sañjaya),
ensconced in the lake,
agitated by these words,
began sighing heavily like
a mahā-serpent in its hole.

36 O rājā! Like a pedigreed horse
refusing to be whipped,
Duryodhana could not tolerate
the whip-like words
that Yudhiṣṭhira hurled
at him again and again.

37 Carrying his gold-ornamented
heavy iron mace,
valiant Duryodhana
parted the waters
of the lake, and emerged
and stood outside.

38 Out of the waters, he began
sighing heavily
like an Indra-among-snakes.
Slicing through
the waters, with his mace
upon his shoulders,

39 Your valiant son looked
like the radiant
resen sun itself.
That gold-ornamented,
extremely heavy
iron mace –

40 The mahā-powerful,
percipient son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
held it firmly in his hands.
Holding his mace,
they saw him
like a mountain peak,

41 Or like Śiva, trident in hand,
blazing with anger
in front of his followers.
Brandishing his mace,
he looked as resplendent
as the flaming sun.

42 Seeing mahā-armed, foe-
exterminating Duryodhana
emerge from the waters,
mace in hand, all thought
he was rod-wielding
Antaka-Yama himself.

43 O lord of men!
All the Pāñcālas there
saw you son as
thunderbolt-wielding
Śakra-Indra
and as Hara-Śiva.

44 They saw him emerge
from the waters of the lake,
and the Pāñcālas
and the Pāṇḍavas
were delighted,
and held each other's hands.

45 Your son Duryodhana
treated this action of theirs
as an insult;
he rolled his eyes
and stared hard at them,
as if to scorch them.

46 Contracting his borw
into three furrows,
he bit his lips,
and said
to Keśava-Krishna
and the Pāṇḍavas:

47 "Listen to me,
O Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas!
You will pay a price
for this insult –
I will kill you and
send you to Yama's abode!"

48 Your son Duryodhana
(continued Sañjaya)
emerged from the lake
mace in hand
and stood there, blood
all over his body.

49 With water-and-blood
trickling down
his body, he looked
like a mountain
with waterfalls
streaming on its slopes.

50 And the Pāṇḍavas
saw him like
infuriated Vaivasvata-Yama;
with his uplifted mace
he looked like
trident-wielding Śiva.

51 Snorting like a huge
cloud-roaring bull,
that valiant hero
exultantly challenged
Pṛtha-Kuntī's sons
to a mace-duel.

52 Duryodhana said: "Yudhiṣṭhira!
Come, all of you,
fight me one by one.
It is against
the rules for one
to fight many,

53 Specially one who is
without armour,
chariot, soldiers, horse,
elephant – one
wounded and recovering
in a lake."

54 “Suyodhana-Duryodhana!”
replied Yudhiṣṭhira.
“Why did this not strike you
when your gang
of mahā-chariot-heroes
attacked Abhimanyu?

55 Kṣatriya-dharma must be
completely unfeeling,
cruel and pitiless –
or how could all
of you have joined
to slaughter Abhimanyu,

56 Because all you heroes
are followers
of dharma, are you not?
And yet you dare
to advise me what is right
and what is wrong.

57 And yet you complain
you are one
against many!
Sakra-Indra's realm
is for those warriors
who fight justly.

58 If it's dharma that many
should not fight one,
tell me: what possessed
all you mahā-
chariot-heroes to kill
one Abhimanyu?

59 In a crisis, everyone rubbishes
the wisdom
of dharma-darśana.
They don't mind then
to shut the gates
of heaven.

60 O Bharata hero!
Put on armour,
tidy and tie your hair,
and get ready
whatever you need
for the duel.

61 I give you my word again,
O hero:
'You have the option
of choosing one
of the five Pāṇḍavas
for the duel.

62 Kill him, and be the rājā.
Get killed,
and go to heaven.'
Tell me, hero,
anything else you want,
except your life."

63 O rājā! Your son Duryodhana
(continued Sañjaya)
put on golden armour
and a dazzling
Jāmbu-river-gold-ornamented
head-protector.

64 O rājā! Wearing that
head-protector
and clad in golden armour,
your son dazzled
like the rājā-of-mountains
Meru.

65 O rājā! Adorned for battle,
clad in armour,
mace in hand,
your son Duryodhana
said to all
the Pāṇḍavas:

66 "Let any of you brothers
step forward
for the mace-duel.
I will fight
Sahadeva, or Bhīma,
or Nakula,

67 O bull-brave Bharatas,
or Phālguna-Arjuna,
or even you.
I will take on
one of you
in combat, and win.

68 Today, with the help
of my gold-ornamented
mace, I will go
beyond the world of war,
a world that is very difficult
to reach.

69 There is no one who
can equal me
in mace-combat.
With my mace
I can kill
all of you.

70 Not one of you singly,
not all together,
can defeat me in mace-duel.
I should not praise myself,
but today I will make
every word I say come true.

71 Soon enough, you will see
if what I say
is a lie or the truth.
Let him who
will fight with me
pick up his mace!"

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
When Duryodhana started
fulminating like this, angry Vāsudeva-
Krishna said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 "What is going to happen,
Yudhiṣṭhira,
if Duryodhana
opts for Arjuna,
or Nakula,
or Sahadeva?

3 O rājā! Whatever made you
commit yourself
to saying, 'You can be
the Kaurava rājā
if you can kill
any one of us'?

4 I do not think you
can rout him
in mace-fight.
For thirteen years he
has practised
mace-combat,

5 O rājā, with an iron
statue of Bhīma.
O bull-brave Bharata!
How can you
expect as then
to succeed?

6 O unexcelled King!
You have exceeded your kindness
and created this problem.
I cannot see anyone
who can equal him
in mace-combat

7 Except wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
who sadly is out of practice.
What is this
except another kind
of dice-game?

8 O lord of the world!
A dice-game
more terrifying than Śakuni's
Granted Bhīma
is strong and able,
but rājā Duryodhana.

9 Suyodhana is the one who
has more practice,
and practice, O rājā, always
excels prowess.
O rājā! You have made
your enemy your equal.

10 A problem for you,
a crisis for us.
What kind of person
will ever do this –
after defeating his enemies,
with only one enemy left,

11 And that enemy helpless –
and the kingdom
in his hands, and he goes
and stakes that kingdom
in a perilous wager of
one-to-one combat?

12 I cannot see anyone
in this world,
no, not even a god,
who has the power
to defeat Duryodhana
in mace-combat.

13 He has practised far more
than any of you.
Bhīma, Nakula, Sahadeva,
Phālguna-Arjuna cannot
defeat rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana
in a fair fight.

14 O Bharata-descendant!
That being so,
What possessed you
to tell him,
'Kill any one of us,
and be the rājā'?

15 Even if wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-
Bhīma fights, victory
is uncertain, because
of all warriors
who fight fairly,
Duryodhana is the best.

16 And yet you gave him word
again and again,
'Kill any one of us,
and be the rājā'!
Pāṇḍu's and Kuntī's children
don't deserve the kingdom.

17 They were born to live
in forest-exile,
and go about as beggars."
Bhīma said:
"Madhusūdana-Krishna! Yadu-
nandana-Krishna, do not worry.

18 Today I will reach that limit
of the world of war
that is very difficult to reach.
I will kill
Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
No doubt of that.

19 Krishna, I can clearly
foresee the victory
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
My mace
is one and a half time's
heavier than Duryodhana's.

20 So, Madhava-Krishna,
do not upset yourself,
you are unduly agitated.
I am ready
to proceed to battle,
armed with my mace.

21 O grinder-of-people
Janardana-Krishna!
See me when I fight!
With my weapons
I can fight the inhabitants
of the three worlds.

22 Compared to them, Krishna,
who is Suyodhana-
Duryodhana?" Wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
said this (continued Sañjaya),
and Vāsudeva-Krishna

23 Was pleased with his words,
and praised him,
saying: "O maha-musscled one!
Dharma's son
Yudhiṣṭhira,
with the help of your prowess,

24 Has succeeded in killing
his enemies
and regaining his kingdom.
Certainly it was you
who killed the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
on the battlefield.

25 It was you who killed
so many rājās and princes
and war-elephants.
Kaliṅga, Magadha,
Prācya, Gāndhāra,
and the Kuru-kingdom –

26 Their warriors, O Pāṇḍu's son,
fell at your hands
in that mahā-carnage.
You will kill Duryodhana
and present
this sea-girdled earth,

27 O son of Kuntī, to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
like Viṣṇu
presenting the three worlds
to Śacī's consort Indra.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wicked son
will die at your hands.

28 You will keep your promise
and smash both his thighs.
Pārtha-Bhīma,
remember to fight
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
with full concentration,

29 Because he has practised hard,
he is powerful,
and he knows all the tricks of combat."
O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Sātyaki offered his pūjā-respect
to Pāṇḍava Bhīma.

30 The Pāñcālas, the Pāṇḍavas,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and others
praised Bhīma fulsomely
and offered him
pūjā-respect.

31 Brutally brave Bhīma
turned to Yudhiṣṭhira
who was surrounded
by the Sṛñjaya warriors,
and shone like the sun,
and said:

32 "I am all set
to clash with Duryodhana
in the mace-duel.
There is no way
this utter scoundrel
can defeat me.

33 The anger that I have long nourished
in my heart
against Suyodhana-Duryodhana –
I will let loose today,
like Arjuna shooting fire-arrows
at Khāṇḍava-forest.

34 O son of Pāṇḍu! O rājā!
Be happy,
for today I will kill
wicked Duryodhana with my mace,
and pluck out the thorn
in your heart.

35 O defectless one!
I will place today
a fame-garland round your neck,
and put an end
to the life and the glory
of Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

36 When he hears
I have killed his son,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra will repent
all that he did
when he followed the advice
of Śakuni."

37 Saying this,
finest-of-Bharata-heroes Bhīma
stood up and, lifting his mace,
threw a challenge
to Duryodhana,
like Śakra-Indra challenging Vṛtra.

38 Your wonderfully valiant son
Duryodhana
was infuriated by the challenge.
He stood up,
like one musth elephant
about to attack another.

39 All the assembled warriors
of the Pāṇḍavas
saw your son standing erect,
brandishing his mace,
and he looked like the tall-peaked
Kailāsa mountain.

40 Like a musth elephant
separated from his herd,
your mahā-powerful son Duryodhana
advanced;
and the Pāṇḍavas broke
into loud exultation.

41 No confusion, no fear,
no anxiety, no pain
troubled the mind
of Duryodhana.
He strode forward
like a lion.

42 O rājā! Seeing Duryodhana,
mace in hand,
looking like the tall-peaked
Kailāsa mountain,
advancing,
Bhīma said:

43 "Remember how Draupadī
in her period
was insulted in the sabhā,
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was cheated at dice
by Śakuni?

44 O wicked-ātmaned Duryodhana!
Today you will taste
the mahā-bitter fruits
of these and other crimes
you perpetrated
against the innocent Pāṇḍavas.

45 Because of you
the mahā-illustrious
finest-of-the-Bharatas Gaṅgā's son,
our grandfather
Pitamāha Bhīṣma
is lying on a bed of arrows.

46 Because of you,
Droṇa, Karṇa,
valiant Śalya,
and strife-fomenter Śakuni
are lying dead
on the battlefield.

47 Try and recall
all the wrongs
you and Dhṛtarāṣṭra
committed against us,
and what you did to us
in Vārāṇāvata.

48 Your brothers
and your valiant sons,
your soldiers who never
retreated in battle,
and so many rājās,
are all lying dead.

49 Not only these,
so many more bull-brave Kṣatriyas
are dead.
The Prātikāmin
who insulted Draupadī
is dead.

50 Only you are still alive,
you polluter
of family honour!
But have no doubts –
this mace of mine
will kill you today.

51 O king!
Today I will reduce
your pride to dust,
and your royal ambitions,
and put an end to your crimes
against the Pāṇḍavas."

52 "Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,"
replied Duryodhna,
"why all this big talk?
Come, fight me,
and see what I do
to your battle-*śraddhā*.

53 Wicked Bhīma!
Can't you see me standing
like a Himālayan peak,
mace in hand,
poised to do battle
with you?

54 Wicked Bhīma!
Where is the enemy
who dares defeat me?
In a fair fight,
even Purandara-Indra
cannot defeat me.

55 Son of Kuntī!
Your roaring
is like the mellow music
of autumn clouds.
Show me
what little prowess you have!"

56 All the victory-seeking
Sṛñjayas and Pāṇḍavas
heard these words
of Duryodhana,
and they offered him
their pūjā-respect.

57 O rājā! Like hunters
rousing a musth elephant
to fury by clapping,
the Pāṇḍavas
encouraged Duryodhana
with loud claps.

58 The elephants of the victory-
seeking Pāṇḍavas trumpeted,
their horses neighed. Their war-weapons
glowed with splendour.

SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya)
As the terrible duel
was about to begin,
and the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
sat down
to witness it,

2 Palmyra-emblemed
and plough-weaponed Balarāma
suddenly arrived
to witness the duel
of the warriors
who were both his pupils.

3 His presence there delighted
Keśava-Krishna
and the Pāṇḍavas.
They touched his feet,
and offered him
their pūjā-respect.

4 After the pūjā-respect,
they said
to Balarāma:
"Witness, Balarāma,
the war-skills
of your pupils."

5 Seeing Krishna, the Pāṇḍavas,
and Duryodhna of the Kauravas
standing
with his mace,
Balārama said
to them:

6 "It is now fortytwo days
since I left
when the Puṣya constellation
was in the ascendant;
I have returned
in the ascendancy of Śravaṇa.

7 I must witness
this mace-duel
of my students."
Mace-armed Duryodhana
and wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma

8 Stepped forward
for the duel.
Both heroes looked radiant.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
embraced
plough-weaponed Balarāma,

9 Welcomed him,
and enquiired
about his welfare.
Mahā-bowmen Krishna and Arjuna
also welcomed
Halāyudha-Balarāma,

10 And with deep affection
the illustrious pair
embraced Balarāma.
Mādrī's twin sons
and Draupadī's
five sons

11 Respectfully welcomed
Rohiṇī's son
mahā-powerful Balarāma,
and stood beside him.
O earth-ruler!
Bhīma and your powerful son

12 With maces in hand
offered their pūjā-respect
to Balarāma.
After they had all welcomed
and similarly
offered their respect,

13 Those rulers-of-men
looked
at the mahātmā son of Rohiṇī,
and said:
"O mahā-muscled one!
Witness the duel."

14 Balarama also embraced
the Pāṇḍavas,
Sṛñjayas
and the illimitably powerful earth-lords,
and enquired
about their welfare.

15 They in turn enquired
about the health
of Balārama.
After the plough-wielding hers
had observed
all the formalities

16 Of asking about
their health
and wishing them well,
he lovingly embraced
Janārdana-Krishna
and Sātyaki.

17 O rājā! He smelt
the crowns of their heads,
and enquired
about their welfare,
and they offered pūjā-respect
to their guru-elder.

18 It was like Indra
and Upendra
joyfully revering lord-of-gods Brahmā.
Then Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
said
to Rohiṇī's foe-crushing son:

19 "Balarāma! Witness the duel,
the mahā-combat
of the two cousin-brothers."
O Bharata descendant!
Keśava-Krishna's mahā-armed elder brother
sat in the middle

20 After receiving the pūjā-respect
of the two
mahā-chariot-heroes.
With the two rājās
on either side,
blue-robed and fair-skinned

21 Balarāma glowed
with the beauty
of the moon
surrounded by stars.
And then
began the tumultuous
and horripilating

22 Combat, O rājā,
between the two sons,
a combat calculated
to end finally
the bitter hatred
between them.

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 On the eve of the war (said Janamejaya),
Prabhu, lord,
with Keśava-Krishna's approval,
Balarāma and the Vṛṣṇis left on a pilgrimage.

2 At the time of leaving he said:
'Keśava-Krishna!
I will not support Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
nor Pāṇḍu's sons.'

3 O Brahmin!
I want to know from you
how and why
the killer-of-Kṣatriyas Balarāma
returned
after saying what he said.

4 O perfect Brahmin!
You speak so skilfully.
Tell me in detail
how Balarāma came there,
and how he reacted
to the mace-duel."

5 Vaiśampāyana replied:
This happened when the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
were in Upaplavya.
They sent Madhusūdana-Krishna
as their envoy
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra

6 In an effort to make peace,
O mahā-muscled one,
for the good of all creatures.
He arrived in the capital
Hastināpura,
and he met Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

7 And put forward various proposals,
practical suggestions,
for the welfare of all.
But, as I told you earlier,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
did not listen to him.

8 Unable to make any headway
in the cause of peace,
finest-of-men Krishna,
the strong-armed envoy,
decided, O ruler-of-men,
to return to Upaplavya.

9 O tiger-among-men!
Failing in his mission,
Krishna took leave
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and reported
to the Pāṇḍavas:

10 "They are victims of Kāla,
the Kauravas,
they will not listen to me.
The Puṣya constellation
is ascendant today.
Pāṇḍavas, come with me."

11 When the armies of both sides
were preparing for battle,
Krishna's elder brother,
strongest-of-the-strong,
Rohiṇī's mahā-minded son
Balarāma said:

12 "O mahā-muscled
Madhusūdana-Krishna!
Help the Kauravas."
But Krishna
at the time
refused outright.

13 Seething with silent anger,
the mahā-illustrious
Yādava-descendant
plough-weaponed Balarāma
left on a pilgrimage
on the banks of the Sarasvatī.

14 During the ascendancy
of the Maitra-Anurādhā constellation,
the foe-crushing Bhoja ruler
Kṛtavarman,
with all his Yādavas,
joined the ranks of Duryodhana.

15 Sātyaki,
with Vāsudeva-Krishna,
joined the Pāṇḍavas.
After Rohiṇī's son Balarāma left,
under Puṣya's ascendancy,
Madhusūdana-Krishna,

16 Placing the Pāṇḍavas in front,
advanced in the direction
of Kurukṣetra.
In the course of his pilgrimage,
not having gone very far,
Balarāma said to his followers:

17 “Go quickly to Dvārakā
and bring the essentials
needed on a pilgrimage:
gold and silver,
milch cows, robes,
and horses

18 And elephants, and chariots,
mules, camels,
and other beasts of burden –
and whatever else
is required for those
who go on a *tirtha*-yātrā,

19 Specially the sacred *agnihotṛ*-fire
required
by the yajña-performers.
O swift-speeding followers,
go immediately
along the Sarasvati

20 And bring back also with you
thousands of *ṛtviks*
and bull-brave Brahmins.”
Giving these instructions
to his followers,
mahā-powerful Balarāma

21 Began his *tirtha*-yātrā,
O rājā,
at Kurukṣetra itself,
and proceeded
along both banks
of the Sarasvatī river.

22 Accompanying him
were *ṛtviks*-priests,
well-wishers, brilliant Brahmins
and, O bull-brave Bharata,
chariots, elephants, horses,
and attendants.

23 He was surrounded
by countless carriages
pulled by cows and mules and camels.
For the welfare
of the tired and the distressed,
the diseased and elderly

24 Of the different territories
he passed through,
he had with him, O rājā,
a store of articles
which he distributed as gifts
to the needy.

25 O Bharata descendant!
The charity was given
strictly according to the need
of the receiver.
Food centres were set up
for the hungry.

26 O king! Any twice-born
of any territory
they passed through
who asked for food
was instantly provided
with a meal and water.

27 O rājā! On instructions
from Rohiṇī's son Balarāma,
his attendants
had ample stocks
of food and drink
to distribute wherever they went.

28 And for Brahmins
who were looking for comfort,
expensive dresses and beds
and bedcovers
and pūjā-articles
were readily available.

29 O Bharata descendant!
Any twice-born,
awake or asleep,
was assured
of receiving
the best of everything.

30 Happy were all who travelled,
and all who rested,
during this pilgrimage.
The least desire
of any traveller
was immediately met.

31 O bull-brave Bharata!
Water for the thirsty,
food for the hungry,
was provided in plenty;
and clothes and ornaments
as well.

32 O valiant rājā!
To the pilgrims
and others on this journey,
the comforts provided
made it indeed
a heavenly experience.

33 An always pleasant journey,
delicious food and drink,
a feeling of auspiciousness ...
There were shops and stalls
where buying and selling
went on continuously ...
Thronging crowds at these shops
which were gem-decorated,
under creeper-covered trees. ...

34

The twice-born were gifted
thousands of milch cows
with gold-plated horns,
beautifully caparisoned;
along with horses
from various lands,
and of the best pedigree;
and chariots too,
and lovely slave-girls.

35

In addition to these,
Balarāma gifted away
varieties of gems,
pearls, precious stones,
coral, the finest gold,
and the purest silver
and utensils
made of iron
and copper.

36

O rājā! The finest
of the Yādava heroes,
plough-weaponed
Halabhṛt-Balarāma,
the mahātmā pilgrim
on that sacred *tīrtha*
happily gave the twice-born
lavish *dakṣiṇās*
after ritual ceremonies.

37

So the liberal-hearted,
illimitably radiant mahātmā
Balarāma distributed largesse
at the Sarasvatī *tīrthas*,
and after the pilgrimage
arrived at Kurukṣetra.

38

"O finest of the twice-born,"
asked Janamejaya,
"tell me all about
the Sarasvatī *tīrthas* –
their origin, their merits,
the fruits of visiting them.

39 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
O Brahma-wise one!
I am curious to know
performances of what rites
and ceremonies
brings a person fulfilment."

40 O Indra-among-rājās!
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
Listen carefully to what I say
about the origin,
merits, and fruits
of visiting the *tīrthas*.

41 Mahārāja!
The finest Yādava hero Balarāma,
with *ṛtviks*, well-wishers and Brahmins
first visited Prabhāsa
where the Moon,
afflicted with galloping phthisis,

42 Was freed of the curse.
O Indra-among-men!
Recovered, he now illumines the world.
That *tīrtha*
is called Prabhāsa, the Illumination,
for that reason.

43 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!"
said Janamejaya.
"How did Soma the moon
develop phthisis?
How did he bathe
in this *tīrtha*?

44 O mahā-muni!
How did he become
his own healthy self
after bathing in it?
Describe all this to me
in detail."

45 O lord of the world!
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
Tāta! My child!
Dakṣa had twentyseven daughters
whom he gave in marriage
to Soma.

46 O Indra-among-rājās!
These auspicious-karma wives of Soma
are known as
Nakṣatra-constellations
because they help
in the calculation of time.

47 They were large-eyed beauties,
all of them.
No girl on earth
came anywhere near them.
And loveliest of them all
was Rohiṇī.

48 Naturally Bhagavān Soma
loved her excessively.
She was the lady
of his heart;
he would love only her
all the time.

49 O Indra-among-rājās!
Because Soma
devoted himself exclusively to Rohiṇī,
the other Nakṣatras
were very angry
with mahātmā Soma.

50 Cautiously they went to their father,
Prajāpati Dakṣa,
and said: "Soma does not come to us
any more.
His only enjoyment
is Rohiṇī.

51 Prajeśvara! Lord of creation!
All we sisters
will stay with you.
We will fast,
and practise
severe tapasyā."

52 Dakṣa heard their complaint,
and said to Soma:
"You must treat
all your wives equally.
It is mahā-adharma
not to do so."

53 To the girls Dakṣa said,
"Go back to him.
I have spoken to him.
On my command,
he will treat
all of you equally."

54 Advised by their father;
they returned
to their husband.
But,
O lord of the earth,
Bhagavān Soma

55 Persisted in his exclusive passion
for Rohiṇī.
So the girls
trooped back
to their father,
and said:

56 "We will stay with you.
We will serve you.
Soma has no desire
to be with us.
He does not obey
your command."

57 Their complaint made Dakṣa
threaten Soma:
"O radiant Moon!
Learn to treat your wives
equally,
or I will curse you."

58 Spurning the threat of Daksa,
Soma continued
his exclusive attachment
to Rohiṇī.
This infuriated
his other wives.

59 They went to their father,
pranāma-ed him by touching his feet
with their heads,
and said:
"Soma does not want us.
Please give us shelter.

60 Bhagavān Soma has eyes
only for Rohiṇī.
He treats your words
as nothing.
He has no feelings
for us.

61 Help us. Find a way
to make Soma love us."
These words,
O lord of the earth,
made Bhagavān Dakṣa
very angry.

62 He created the curse
of galloping phthisis
for Soma, the star-lord moon.
The disease wasted his body,
and Soma
became emaciated.

63 O rājā! He tried all he could
to get rid
of the disease.
Mahārāja!
No amount of yajñas
and rituals and ceremonies

64 Helped to free him
from the curse.
His health worsened daily.
With the health of the moon
deteriorating,
vegetation sickened.

65 The rasa of plants dried up,
they became tasteless,
they lost every plant-quality.
With plants and vegetation
sickening,
life itself sickened.

66 With Soma's ill health
grew the ill health
of human beings.
O lord of the earth!
The gods went to Soma
and said:

67 "What has happened to you?
You look so pale.
Is some mahā-fear
troubling you?
You must tell us
the reason.

68 Once we know the cause,
we will do our best
to help you."
On the persistent urging
of the gods,
the hare-marked moon

69 Narrated to them
all about the curse
that caused his phthisis.
They heard him out,
and went to Dakṣa
and said:

70 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!
Be gracious
and remove this curse on Soma.
O lord of gods!
Because of this curse,
people are wasting away,

71 And all varieties of creepers
and plants and herbs
are drying up.
After they waste away,
we gods too
will all waste away.

72 So emaciated is the Moon
that very little of him
can be seen.
O Loka-guru!
Now that you know this,
have pity on the Moon."

73 Their intercession
made Prajāpati Dakṣa
reply to the gods:
"There is no way
my word
can be turned around.

74 O mahā-fortune-favoured ones!
There is, of course, one way
to make that happen:
If the Moon
decides to treat his wives,
all of them, equally,

75 And bathes
in that finest of all *tīrthas,*
the Sarasvatī,
the hare-marked Moon
will recover completely.
I give you my word.

76 For half of every month
Soma will wane,
and wax the other half.
About this waxing
and waning,
you have my word.

77 On the banks of the western ocean
into which
flows the Sarasvatī,
there let him adore Deveśa,
the god-of-gods Śiva,
and he will recover."

78 As instricted by the ṛṣi
Prajapatī Dakṣa,
Soma proceeded
to the finest *tīrtha*
of the Sarasvatī
called Prabhāsa.

79 On the *amāvāsyā* day
of the new moon,
mahā-radiant, mahā-energetic Soma
bathed there,
and with his cool rays
illuminated the earth.

80 O Indra-among-rājās!
The gods also
recovered their glory
and returned with Soma
and stood
before Dakṣa.

81 Bhagavān Prajāpati Dakṣa
gave them leave
to go, and,
pleased with Soma,
Prājāpati Dakṣa
said to him:

82 "My son,
never mistreat your wives,
and never mistreat Brahmins.
Go!
And remember
to follow my advice."

83 Mahārāja Janamejaya!
Saying this,
Dakṣa gave him leave to go.
Soma returned to his place
to the delight
of all creatures.

84 This is the story
of how Soma was cursed,
and why the Prabhāsa
is considered
to be the mahā-*tīrtha*
of all *tīrthas.*

85 Mahārāja! Every *amāvāsyā*
of the new moon,
hare-marked Soma bathes
in incomparable Prabhāsa,
and regains there
his *prabhāsa*-radiance.

86 O lord of the earth!
That is why
it is the Prabhāsa *tīrtha,*
because by bathing in it
Soma regained
his *prabhāsa*-radiance.

87 After this, powerful Balarāma
went to the *tīrtha*
called the Camasodbheda,
which to this day
is still known by everyone
as the Camasodbheda.

88 Giving away gifts
in large quantities,
and spending one night
in Camasodbheda,
very quickly,
plough-wielding Halāyudha-Balarāma,

89 Keśava-Krishna's elder brother,
proceeded to Udapāna,
a *tīrtha* hoary with time,
visiting which
brings the pilgrim
mahā-fruitful merits.

90 O Indra-among-rājās
Janamejaya! There,
lush vegetation and fragrant soil
remind the fulfilled pilgrim
of the Sarasvatī
flowing unseen, subterranean.

SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 Mahārāja! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Halāyudha-Balarāma went
to the illustrious muni Trita's *tīrtha* Udapāna,
on the Sarasvatī river.

2 Distributing lavish wealth
to the twice-born,
and offering them pūjā-respect,
club-wielding Musalāyudha-Balarāma
happily
touched water there.

3 The mahātmā ṛṣi
of more-than-mahā-tapasyā,
radiant-with-dharma Trita
lived in Udapāna
inside a hole,
where he drank soma-juice.

4 His two brothers had abandoned him
in that hole,
and left,
and so
that finest-of-Brahmins Trita
cursed them.

5 Janamejaya asked:
"How did Udapāna come to be?
How did Trita of mahā-tapasyā
fall in a hole?
Why did his brothers desert him,
O excellent Brahmin?

6 What could have made them
abandon their brother
and go to their home?
And how did Trita in the hole
perform yajñas
and drink soma-juice?

7 If you think
I am a worthy listener,
then tell me all, O Brahmin."
Vaiśampāyana said:
"In an earlier yuga, O rājā,
lived three muni brothers:

8 Ekata, Dvita and Trita,
all resplendent like the sun,
all blessed
with many children,
like Prajāpati was,
and all

9 Wise-in-Brahmā,
and living in Brahmā's realm
through the merits of their tapasyā.
Their tapasyā,
dedication and self-control
pleased

10 Their delighting-in-dharma
father Gautama hugely.
A long time
passed,
and their father,
happy with their tapasyā,

11 Bhagavān Gautama went
to the realm in the other world
deserved by him.
O rājā!
Those rājās
who revered mahātmā Gautama

12 Offered their pūjā-respect
to his sons
after Gautama went to heaven.
It was clear, however,
O rājā,
that in karma and sacred studies

13 It was Trita who surpassed
his two brothers.
He was like his father.
The mahā-fortune-favoured
and praised-for-piety munis
also

14 Offered Trita
the same pūjā-respect
which they gave his father.
It happened once, O rājā,
that the two brothers
Ekata and Dvita

15 Wanted to perform yajñas
and amass wealth.
O foe-chastising monarch!
It occurred to them
that,
taking Trita with them,

16 They would perform yajñas,
collect many animals as *dakṣiṇā*,
and celebrate
the mahā-fruits
of their endeavours
by drinking soma-juice.

17 They planned all this out,
O rājā,
and carried out their plan.
With the animals in mind,
they got the *yajamāna*-priests
to do yajña,

18 And they collected a large number
of animals
which were gifted
as the customary tribute
to the *yajamāna* performers
of sacred rituals.

19 Then the three mahā-ātmaned
mahā-ṛṣis
proceeded eastwards.
Mahārāja!
Trita cheerfully
led the way,

20 And Ekata and Dvita
followed behind,
guiding their gifted animals.
Seeing
that mahā-congregation of animals,
it struck

21 Ekata and Dvita: *Why Trita?*
Why not keep
all these cattle for ourselves?
They hatched a plan,
those two,
Ekata and Dvita,

22 The wicked brothers – a plan,
O lord of men,
which I will now explain.
"Trita is skilled
in yajña-performance,
Trita knows the Vedas.

23 He can always get
more cows –
any number of them.
Let's take
these cows away
with us –

24 Trita can go wherever
he likes –
he doesn't need us."
Night fell.
In the dark,
a wolf blocked their way.

25 Not too far away,
on the bank of the Sarasvatī,
was this well-like hole.
Seeing the wolf facing him,
blocking his way,
Trita

26 Fled in fear,
and slipped inside
that huge hole,
a pit so massive
that it terrified
every creature.

27 Mahārāja!
The instant he fell,
that finest of munis
screamed in terror,
and his brothers
heard his cries.

28 They heard their brother
screaming,
but fear of the wolf
and greed for the cows
made them desert him
and save themselves.

29 O rājā!
Greedy for the cattle,
those two brothers
abandoned
their mahā-tapasyā-dedicated brother
in that waterless hole.

30 O finest of the Bharatas!
Like a wicked ill-doer
forsaken in hell,
Trita found himself
alone in that grass-and-fern-
and-creeper-covered hole,

31 Vastly-wise Trita thought,
fearing he would die,
with no soma-juice to drink:
What should I do?
How do I go about getting soma-juice
in his hole?

32 Even as he was thinking this,
muni-of-mahā-tapasyā
Trita
noticed a creeper
climbing along
a side of the hole.

33 It was a waterless hole,
dry and sandy.
But Trita imagined
water to be there,
and the sacred fire,
and he the *hotṛ*-priest.

34 The muni of more-than-mahā-tapasyā
imagined
the creeper to be the soma plant,
and in his mind
he chanted from the Ṛk, Sāma,
and Yajur Vedas.

35 O king! He fantasised
the grains of sand
to be the stone slab
on which he pressed the soma-juice,
and water to be ghee.
Then, laying aside the gods' share,

36 He offered it to the gods,
along with the soma-juice,
to the loud imagined chanting
of sacred verses. O rājā!
That silent chanting of Trita
reached heaven.

37 Trita had performed
the yajña exactly
as prescribed by those
who are wise-in-the-Vedas.
That mahā-yajña of Trita
of mahā-tapasyā

38 Created consternation in heaven,
but no one knew
why this happened.
Hearing that tumultuous chanting
of sacred verses,
Bṛhaspati,

39 The purohita of the gods,
 said: "Gods!
Trita is performing
 his yajña.
Come, gods,
 let us all go there.

40 Such is his mahā-tapasyā
 that if we don't go,
he will angrily create new gods
 to worship."
Following Bṛahaspati's advice,
 all the gods

41 Proceeded to where
 Trita was performing
his yajña.
 They saw Trita,
trapped inside
 that huge hole.

42 They saw him busy
 in the performance
of the yajña-karma.
 The mahātmā muni
was glowing
 with a divine radiance.

43 They said
 to the mahā-fortune-favoured muni:
"We have come for our share."
 The ṛṣi replied:
"O dwellers of heaven!
 Look at my state!

44 I have fallen
 in this fearful pit.
I have lost my senses."
 Mahārāja!
He gave them
 their allotted share,

45 Chanting mantras as he did so,
and the gods
were highly gratified.
Having received
their allotted sacrificial share,
the dwellers of heaven

46 Were delighted,
and offered him any boon
that he wanted.
The only boon
he asked of the gods
was this:

47 "Take me out of this pit,
and grant to anyone
who touches this spot
the merit of a soma-drinker."
O rājā! Wave-rippling Sarasvatī
gushed out of the pit,

48 Carrying Trita with her
to the safe ground above.
There, Trita offered pūjā-respect
to the heaven dwellers.
O rājā!
Saying, "So be it," they went away.

49 As they had come.
And Trita also, happily,
returned to his home.
There,
meeting his two ṛṣi brothers,
the incensed

50 Muni of mahā-tapasyā, Trita,
cursed them,
saying, bitterly:
"Your greed for cattle
made you abandon me
and run away.

51 You will be transformed
into ravening
sharp-toothed wolves
roaming everywhere,
cursed by me
for your wickedness.

52 And your progeny
will be leopards and bears
and tree-dwelling *vānaras.*"
O lord of the world!
Even as he said this,
that very instant

53 The words of that truth-speaker
transformed the brothers
into wolves.
Limitlessly illustrious plough-weaponed
Halāyudha-Balarāma
touched the water there,

54 Pūjā-respected the twice-born,
and gave them
lavish gifts.
Praising the *tīrtha*
of Udāpana
again and again,

55 On the bank
of the Sarasvatī river,
liberal-ātmaned Balarāma
proceeded to Vinaśana.

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 O rājā! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Halāyudha-Balarāma came to Vinaśana
where the Sarasvatī,
hating Śūdras and Ābhīras, is subterranean.

2 Which is why the ṛṣis name
this *tīrtha* Vinaśana, the Lost.
Mahā-powerful Balarāma bathed
in that Sarasvatī-*tīrtha*,

3 And proceeded
to the lovely Subhūmika bank
of the Sarasvatī,
where fair-complexioned,
exquisite-faced apsarās
can always be seen

4 Tirelessly playing all manner
of enchanting games.
O lord of men!
There, every month,
the gandharvas
and the gods

5 Come to pay homage
to Brahmins
at that sacred *tīrtha*.
O rājā!
There one can see
gandharvas and apsarās

6 Roaming about
and enjoying themselves.
There one can see
the *pitṛ*-ancestors
and the gods,
also enjoying themselves

7 Under vines and creepers,
while auspicious sacred flowers
shower on them.
O rājā!
Because this is the enchanting
playground of apsarās,

8 On the banks of the Sarasvatī,
it is called Subhūmika,
the Supremely Lovely Field.
Bathing there,
Mādhava-Balarāma
gifted lavishly to Brahmins,

9 And listened to the music
of celestial songs and instruments,
and saw
numerous shadows and presences
of gods,
gandharvas and rākṣasas.

10 Then Rohiṇi's son Balarāma
proceeded to the *tīrtha*
of the gandharvas,
where led by Visvāvasu,
many gandharvas,
practising tapasyā,

11 Pass their time
singing entrancing songs, dancing,
and playing musical instruments.
Haladhara-Balarāma,
there also, gifted to Brahmins
lavish wealth,

12 Goats, sheep, cows, rules,
camels, gold and silver;
and fed them
to full satisfaction;
and gratified them
with mahā-riches.

13 Accompanied by them,
as they sang his praises,
Mādhava-Balarāma left
the Gandharva-*tīrtha*.
Mahā-powerful,
foe-destroying,

14 Single-ear-ring-adorned Balarāma
went next
to the Garga-srota mahā-*tīrtha.*
There, his ātman
purified by intense tapasyā,
elderly Garga

15 Assimilated the secrets
of the movements of Kāla
and the constellations,
and their deviations,
and fearful reversals,
and auspicious signs, O Janamejaya.

16 All this knowledge
the mahātmā gained
on this auspicious Sarasvatī-*tīrtha*,
which is why
to this day it is known
as the Garga-srota *tīrtha.*

17 *Prabhu*! Lord! O king!
Strict-vowed
mahā-fortune-favoured ṛṣis
revered Garga
in the hope of attaining
the same Kāla-*jñāna*.

18 Anointed with white sandal-paste,
O mahārāja Janamejaya,
Balarāma at that *tīrtha*
distributed much wealth
to the pure-ātmaned munis
living there.

19 And, after feeding the twice-born
to their heart's content,
mahā-illustrious
blue-robed Balarāma
proceeded to the *tīrtha*
known as the Śaṅkha.

20 There, a giagantic tree,
the Mahā-śaṅkha,
as massive as mahā-Meru mountain,
white as a snow-clad hill,
with ṛṣis beneath it,
was seen

21 By powerful, palmyra-flag-
symbolled Balarāma
on the bank of the Sarasvatī.
Dwelling there
were yakṣas, Vidyādharas,
illimitably powerful rākṣasas,

22 Incomparably strong Piśācas,
and Siddhas too –
thousands of them.
They subsisted
on nothing else
but the fruits of that lordly tree,

23 Observing strict vows,
and following
a perfectly-planned routine.
And wherever, one by one,
they roamed, freely,
those disciplined ones –

24 They were not visible
to mere mortals,
O bull-brave Janamejaya!
O tiger-among-men!
This lordly tree is celebrated
all the world over.

25 This is the world-famous
purifying tree
on the bank of the Sarasvatī.
At this *tīrtha*,
tiger-brave-Yādava Balarāma
gifted milch cows,

26 Copper, iron and other vessels
and costly vestures
to Brahmins.
He pūjā-respected the twice-born,
and received the pūjā-respect
of the tapasyā-rich ascetics.

27 O rājā! Plough-weaponed
Halāyudha-Balarāma
went next to sacred Dvaitavana,
where he saw
a large number of munis
variously dressed.

28 Bathing there,
he offered his pūjā-respect
to the twice-born.
Offering lavish
pleasure-giving gifts
to the Brahmins,

29 Balarāma proceeded, O rājā,
bank along the southern
of the Sarasvatī.
Soon, not too far,
the mahā-illustrious,
mahā-powerful

30 Mahātmā Balarāma
of unfading glory
came to the Nāgadhanvā *tīrtha*,
the dwelling place
of the rājā of Pannaga-serpents
Vāsuki,

31 Mahā-radiant Vāsuki,
O mahārāja,
surrounded by his serpent retinue.
At any given time,
fourteen thousand ṛṣis
dwell in that *tīrtha*.

32 It is there, in the past,
the gods assembled,
and installed the finest of snakes
Vāsuki
as the Pannaga-rājā
of the serpent race.

33 O Paurava descendant Janamejaya!
No one fears snakes
at that *tīrtha.*
Distributing heaps of jewels
to Brahmins, as ordained by tradition,
Balarāma

34 Set out eastwoards
where at every step
there are famous *tīrthas,*
numbering, indeed,
around at least
a hundred thousand.

35 He bathed in those *tīrthas,*
and, as instructed
by the ṛṣis,
he fasted
and distributed
various gifts;

36 Then, honouring the munis
who lived there,
he left the *tīrtha,*
and proceeded,
on their advice, in the direction
the Sarasvatī river

37 Flows,
with the torrential swiftness
of a rain-storm.
Eager to see in the west
the mahātmā ṛṣis
of Naimiṣa forest,

38 The swift-flowing currents
of the Sarasvatī
swing westwards.
White-sandal-pasted-anointed Balarāma,
O rājā, saw this,
and was wonderstruck.

39 "O finest of Adhvaryu-yajña-performers!
O Brahmin!"
said Janamejaya.
"Why did the Sarasvatī
swerve towards the east?
This I want to know.

40 Also, why did the Yādava-descendant
Balarāma
get so wonder-struck?
What was the reason
for the supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī to change course?"

41 O rājā! (replied Vaiśampāyana)
A long time ago,
in the Kṛta-yuga,
the tapasyā-rich ascetics
of the Naimiṣa forest
performed a twelve-year sacrifice,

42 Which *satra* was attended,
O rājā,
by many other ṛṣis also.
At that sacrifice,
the mahā-fortune-favoured
visiting ṛṣis

43 Stayed in the Naimiṣa forest
for all
of twelve years.
There were so many *tīrthas*
for the ṛṣis
in that region.

44

O lord of the world!
The ṛṣis came
in such large numbers
that the southern bank
of the Sarasvatī
became a veritable city.

45

O tiger-among-men!
So enamoured were they
of *tīrtha*-benefits
that the camps of the twice-born
stretched all the way
to Samantapañcaka.

46

And the entire region
resounded
with the chants of the munis
from the *svādhāya*-Vedas
as the pure-ātmaned ones
performed the yajñas.

47

And supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī –
how lovely she looked
with all the mahātmā ṛṣis
performing the *agnihotra*
on her banks!

48

Mahārāja Janamejaya!
Tapasyā-dedicated
Vālakhilyas, Aśmakuṭṭas,
Dantolūkhalis,
and those known
as the Prasaṁkyānas,

49

Those subsisting on air,
those subsisting on water,
those subsisting on leaves
and so many others
with different life-styles,
some sleeping on stone-slabs –

50 All these munis gathered
on the banks of the Sarasvatī,
bringing lustre
to the supreme-among-streams,
like the gods
glorifying the Gaṅgā.

51 All those hundreds upon hundreds
of mahā-vowed ṛṣis
gathered for the *satra* sacrifice
– and there was
not enough place for them
on the Sarasvatī's banks.

52 So they measured out
small plots
with their sacred threads,
and continued
their *agnihotra*-rituals
and other ceremonies.

53 O Indra-among-rājās!
Seeing the despair
of the ṛṣis,
and eager to help them,
the river Sarasvatī
gave them her darshan.

54 She felt pity for them,
O Janamejaya,
and so she made additional space
for them
in various places;
the supreme river swerved.

55 Deciding to change her course,
for their sake,
that supreme river,
O Indra-among-rājās,
veered her flow
eastwards.

56 Having made up her mind
to change her course,
the mahā-river Sarasvatī,
O rājā,
did what she did –
an astonishing feat!

57 O rājā!
O finest of the Kauravas!
And so, these water bodies
seen in Naimiṣa.
You too must perform splendid
feats in Kurukṣetra.

58 Seeing those pools of water
created
by the Sarasvatī river,
mahātmā Balarāma
was struck
with great wonder.

59 The Yādava-descendant Balarāma
bathed there
as ordained by tradition,
and distributed
wealth and expensive utensils
to the twice-born.

60 He arranged a feast
for them.
The Brahmins offered him
their pūjā-respect,
and Balarāma
resumed his pilgrimage.

61 That finest of *tīrthas*
On the Sarasvatī river,
The dwelling-place
Of countless twice-born ascetics,
Badari-jujube, medicinal *iṅguda*,
Kāśmarya-saffron, *vibhītaka* berry,
The waved-leaf fig-tree *plākṣa*,
The sacred fig-tree *aśvattha*,

62 The *Kankola* plant, flowering *palāśa*,
Pilu palm-tree, *karīra* bamboo shoot,
And many other plants gracing
The banks of the Sarasvatī-tīrtha,

63 The cool *parūṣa* berry,
The *bilva* wood-apple,
The pearl-white *atimukta* shrub,
The *āmra*-mango,
The pārijāta coral tree
Of enchanting loveliness,

64 The *kadalī* plantain groves
Delighting the eyes
Of beholders, the habitation
Of subsisters on air, water,
Fruits and leaves,
The Dantolūkhalis

65 And the Aśmakuṭṭas
And other forest-dwelling munis,
Echoing with the sounds
Of *svādhyāya* Vedic chants,
Teeming with herds
Of freely-roaming deer,

66 Looked after
by countless
ahiṁsā-practising
dharma-following
ṛṣis and ascetics –
that was the *tīrtha*
called Sapta-sārasvata
where plough-weaponed
Halāyudha-Balarāma
came next
in the course
of his pilgrimage.

67 This was the *tīrtha*
where the perfected
mahā-muni
Maṅkaṇaka
performed
his great tapasyā.

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 "Why was it called Sapta-sārasvata?"
asked Janamejaya.
"Who was Maṅkaṇaka muni?
How did he atain perfection?

2 O finest of the twice-born!
in which family was he born?
What scriptures
did he study?
O best of the twice-born!
I want to know this."

3 O rājā! (replied Vaiśampāyana)
Seven Sarasvatī rivers
cover the entire world.
Wherever supplicated
by powerful people,
there the Sarasvatī went.

4 Suprabhā, Kāñcanākṣī,
Viśālā, Manoramā,
Sarasvatī,
Oghavatī,
Sureṇu,
Vimalodakā.

5 There was a time
when Brahmā Pītamaha
performed an earth
a mahā-yajña
to which came many
of the perfected twice-born.

6 Everywhere were heard
the sacred chants
of the Vedas.
The gods were delighted,
and came there to make
it a success.

7 Mahārāja! Pitāmaha Brahmā
personally received
the *dīkṣā*-initiation.
All present there
witnessed the solemn success
of the *satra*-sacrifice.

8 O Indra-among-rājās!
Whatever the twice-born there,
skilled in dharma and artha,
mentally desired,
was immediately
provided to them.

9 Bands of gandharvas danced,
and apsarās sang
at that yajña.
And music was played
on a variety
of celestial instruments.

10 The grandeur
of that yajña
enthralled the gods.
They were awe-struck.
What need to mention
its effect on mortals?

11 O rājā! While Pitāmaha Brahmā
was performing this yajña
at Puṣkara,
the ṛṣis said to him:
"No mahā-merit
in this yajña,

12 Because nowhere can we see
the presence
of supreme-among-streams Sarasvatī."
This prompted
Bhagavān Brahmā
to mentally invoke Sarasvatī

13 At the time of the performance
of the yajña at Puṣkara.
And so,
O Indra-among-rājās,
Sarasvatī appeared there
as Suprabhā.

14 Seeing Sarasvatī arrive
so speedily
to revere Pitāmahā Brahmā,
the delighted munis
offered fulsome praise
to the yajña.

15 That is how supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī
appeared at Puṣkara
to please
Pitāmaha Brahmā
and the learned ascetics.

16 O lord of men!
O rājā!
Another time
munis gathered in Naimiṣa
telling stories
and discussing the Vedas.

17 All those munis,
deeply learned
in the *svādhyayā*-Vedas,
met together
and mentally
invoked Sarasvatī.

18 O Indra-among-rājās!
O mahārāja!
To please all of them
and the mahātmā ṛṣis
who were engaged
in the *satra*-rituals,

19 Mahā-fortune-favoured
sacred Sarasvatī
appeared before them.
To the *satra*-ritual-performing munis
in Naimiṣa,
Kāñcanākṣī

20 Was the name by which
supreme-among-streams Sarasvatī
was offered
pūjā-respect.
Gaya organised a mahā-ritual sacrifice
at Gaya.

21 O Bharata descendant!
At Gaya's yajña also
Sarasvatī was mentally invoked,
and to the strict-vowed ṛṣis
she appeared
there as Viśālā.

22 Fast-flowing Sarasvati,
whose source
is in the Himalayas,
was also invoked by Uddālaka
at the yajña
he performed.

23 O rājā! An entire maṇḍala
of munis
had assembled
on the sacred site
of north Kosala.
And mahātmā

24 Uddālaka focused
all his meditation
on Sarasvatī,
and supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī
appeared before the muni.

25 To the bark-and-deerskin-clad
munis
she appeared
as Manoramā the Mind-Pleaser,
because they invoked her
with their minds.

26 When the mahātmā Kuru
and rājā-ṛṣis
performed a sacrifice
on Ṛṣabha island
and Kurukṣetra,
Sureṇu

27 Was the name by which
supreme-among-streams Sarasvatī
appeared before them.
O Indra-among-rājās!
To mahātmā Vasiṣṭha,
Oghavatī was the name

28 By which
the divine river Sarasvatī
appeared in Kurukṣetra.
And when Dakṣa
performed his yajña
at Gaṅgādvāra, Sarasvatī

29 The fast-flowing river
appeared
as the celebrated Sureṇu.
Bhagavatī Sarasvatī was Vimalodā
when Brahmā
performed another yajña

30 On the sacred Himālayas
and mentally invoked her.
These seven streams
mingled
and, as a single river,
arrived at that *tīrtha*,

31 Which is why it is called
Sapta-sārasvata
the Seven-Streamed-Sarasvatī.
So I have explained to you
the names
of the seven Sarasvatīs.

32 I have also explained
the sanctity
of the seven Sarasvatīs.
And now listen
to how Maṅkaṇaka,
from his youth a *brahmacārī*,

33 Performed, O rājā,
a most marvellous deed.
O descendant of Bharata!
It so happened,
he was bathing in the river
and he saw a girl,

34 Lovely-eyed, lovely-limbed,
completely naked,
completely blameless,
also bathing in the Sarasvatī.
Mahārāja! His semen
spilled out in the water.

35 The muni of mahā-tapasyā
collected his semen
in a pot.
In that pot,
the semen divided
into seven parts.

36 Seven ṛṣis were born
from those seven parts.
From those seven ṛṣis
originated all the Maruts.
Vāyuvega, Vāyubala,
Vāyuhā, Vāyumaṇḍala,

37 Vāyujvāla, Vāyuretā,
and valiant Vāyucakra –
from these seven
ṛṣis originated
the fortynine
Marut wind-gods.

38 O rājā! Listen now
to another
truly marvellous story
about the maharṣi,
a story celebrated
in the three worlds.

39 O rājā! I have heard
that, once,
the perfected ṛṣi Maṅkaṇaka's hand
was pierced by a blade of grass
and, not blood,
but vegetable juice trickled out.

40 So ecstatic was the ṛṣi
seeing the vegetable rasa
that he started dancing.
Seeing him dance,
the moving and unmoving creatures
of the world,

41 Overcome
by the turn of events,
also started dancing.
O rājā!
Brahmā, the gods, ṛṣis
and tapasyā-rich ascetics

42 Approached, O lord of men,
    Mahādeva-Śiva
and said: "O divine lord! Deva!
    Do something –
stop this ṛṣi
    from dancing."

43 Seeing the joy-intoxicated ṛṣi
    dancing,
Mahādeva-Śiva,
    desirous of helping
the gods,
    said to him:

44 "*Bho*! *Bho*!
    O Brahmin wise-in-dharma,
why are you dancing?
    Tell me, muni,
what's the cause
    of this excess of joy?

45 O finest of the twice-born!
    A man of tapasyā
is stable in the path of dharma."
    The ṛṣi said:
"Brahmin! Can't you see
    this dripping vegetable juice?

46 *Prabhu*! Lord!
    That is why I am dancing
in mahā-joy."
    The deity laughed and said
to the muni
    who was madly whirling around:

47 "Brahmin! Seeing you
    doesn't surprise me.
Look at me!"
    Percipient Mahādeva-Śiva
said this
    to that finest of munis

48 And, O Indra-among-rājās,
he scratched
his thumb with a finger,
and, O rājā,
a flow of snow-white ash
issued from his thumb.

49 O rājā! Seeing this,
the muni, ashamed,
fell at his feet.
He realised
it was Mahādeva-Śiva
and said, astonished;

50 "I do not consider any god
to be superior
to Rudra-Śiva.
O trident-wielding deity!
O refuge of this world
of gods and anti-gods!

51 All who have insight say
you are the creator
of the cosmos.
And when the yuga dissolves,
the cosmos
goes back into you.

52 Even the gods are unable
to know you –
who am I?
All that is stable in the world,
is stable
because of you.

53 O defectless one!
O granter of boons!
Brahmā and the gods
worship you,
because you are
the all in all.

54 It is your grace
that makes the gods
happy and fearless.
O Śaṅkara-Śiva!
O Supreme Radiance!
Brahmā and Indra are stable in you.

55 O Maheśvara-Śiva!
O root and ruin of the universe!
Origin of all! O Creator
Of the seven worlds of the cosmos!

56 Lord of all life!
Receiver of the worship of the gods!
Origin of the world and all
Its teeming moving and unmoving life!

57 You who offer the supreme heaven
To all humans who strive
For fulfilment of their karma
Through the practice of Dhyana-yoga!

58 Mahādeva! Maheśvara! Kamalekṣaṇa!
Exhaustless is your grace!
Unfailing your grace! O Power
Behind my work, O Everywhere,
Everything, I seek your refuge!"

59 Extolling Mahādeva-Śiva thus,
The ṛṣi *praṇāma-ed* him, saying:
"Lord, forgive this silliness of mine.
Let not all my tapasyā go waste."

60 Pleased, the deity said to him:
"Your tapasyā will grow a thousand-fold
By my grace. I will always
Be present in this āshram with you.

61 Whoever worships me in the *tīrtha*
Called Sapta-sārasvata will face
No difficulty in this world or the next;
He will attain the Sārasvata realm."

62 This is the narrative
Of the supremely energetic Maṅkaṇaka,
Born to Mātariśvan-Vāyu the wind-god
In the womb of Sukanyā.

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 Halāyudha-Balarāma (Vaiśampāyana
continued) offered his pūjā-respect
to the ashram-inmates,
and his loving regard to Maṅkaṇaka.

2 O Bharata-descendant!
Passing the night there,
giving gifts to the twice-born,
receiving the pūjā-respect
of the munis,
he woke the next morning,

3 And bathed in the sacred waters;
then,
mahā-powerful Balarāma,
with the permission
of the munis,
resumed his pilgrimage.

4 Plough-weaponed Halāyudha-Balarāma
arrived
at the Auśanas *tīrtha*,
also known as Kapala-mocana
the Skull-Free;
here, the mahā-muni

5 Mahodra, O rājā,
was freed from the severed head
of a rākṣasa that stuck
to his thigh,
flung in the distant past by Rāma
from very far.

6 It was here, in the past,
the supreme mahātmā
Kāvya-Śukra performed
his tapasyā
which revealed to him
the Code of Law and Ethics.

7 It was here
he reflected deeply
on the Daitya and Dānava anti-gods.
O rājā!
At that finest of *tīrthas*,
Balarāma,

8 As enjoined by tradition,
gave away
lavish wealth to mahātmā Brahmins.
"Brahmin,"
asked Janamejaya,
"why Kapāla-mocana, where mahā-muni

9 Mahodara was freed as you say?
Why did that head
get stuck to his thigh?"
Long ago (replied Vaiśampāyana),
in Daṇḍakāraṇya,
mahātmā Rāghava-Rāma,

10 O tiger-among-rājās,
was busy killing rākṣasas.
In Janasthāna,
he sliced off
the head
of a wicked-ātmaned rākṣasa

11 With a super-sharp razor-arrow.
Speeding
through the mahā-forest
as if at will,
that head fell on the thigh
of Mahodara.

12 It pierced the thigh,
O rājā,
and embedded itself deep in.
As a result
of the head
embedded in his thigh,

13 It was not possible
for the mahā-wise Brahmin
to go on pilgrimages.
Pus formed
in the mahā-muni's thigh,
causing excruciating pain.

14 I have heard, though,
that despite the pain
he visited all the *tirthas.*
That ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā
visited all the river
and ocean *tirthas,*

15 And recounted his story
to the ṛṣis
in those places.
Though he bathed
in all those *tirthas,*
he was not cured.

16 That Indra-of-Brahmins heard
from pure-ātmaned munis
the wonderful news
that there was a *tirtha*
on the Sarasvati river
known as the Auśanasa,

17 A place of peace and perfection,
an all-defect-cancelling
holy spot.
And so
the twice-born ṛṣi proceeded
to Auśanasa-*tirtha.*

18

He touched the waters there,
and bathed in them.
And immediately
the head slipped
out of his thigh
and entered the waters.

19

O radiant one!
What a relief it was
to be freed of that head!
As for the head –
it fell in the waters
and disappeared from sight.

20

O rājā! Thus freed,
the pure-ātmaned,
defect-cleansed
muni Mahodara
returned joyfully
to his āshram.

21

Once there, that twice-born ṛṣi
of mahā-tapasyā
narrated to all
the pure-ātmaned ṛṣis
the story of everything
that happened to him.

22

O destroyer of arrogance!
The ṛṣis listened
to his story,
and named the *tīrtha*
Kapala-mocana
the Skull-Free.

23

Going once again
to that finest of *tīrthas*,
the mahā-ṛṣi Mahodara
drank its water.
That is how the muni
attained supreme perfection.

24 Finest-of-Vṛṣṇi-heroes
Balarāma
distributed wealth lavishly
and pūjā-respected the Brahmins,
and proceeded next
to the āshram of Ruṣaṅgu.

25 O descendant of Bharata!
That is where
Ārṣṭiṣeṇa performed
mortifying tapasyā,
and where mahā-muni Viśvāmitra
attained Brahminhood.

26 O radiant one!
That mahā-āshram
is an all-wish-fulfiller.
There are always
munis and Brahmins
in that āshram.

27 O Indra-among-rājās!
Surrounded by Brahmins,
plough-weaponed Śrīmān
Haladhara-Balarāma
arrived at the āshram
where Ruṣaṅgu forsook his body.

28 O Bharata descendant!
Elderly Ruṣaṅgu
was always absorbed
in profound tapasyā.
Deciding after much thought
to forsake his body,

29 That ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā
called his sons
and said to them:
"Take me to a *tīrtha*
where water is found
in plenty.

30 Respecting their old father,
the tapasyā-rich sons
took tapasyā-rich
Ruṣaṅgu
to that excellent *tīrtha*
on the Sarasvatī.

31 Brought by his sons
to the Sarasvatī *tīrtha*,
finest of merit-bestowing *tīrthas*
where hundreds
of Brahmins dwelt,
percipient Rauṣaṅgu,

32 Absorbed in mahā-tapasyā,
O rājā,
took his bath as ordained;
that best of ṛṣis
listened to the *tīrtha's* merits
to be obtained,

33 And, O tiger-among-men,
calling his sons,
said happily to them:
"Whoever gives up his body
on the plentifully watered
northern bank

34 Of the Sarasvatī,
absorbed in *japa*-meditation –
such a person
is never again visited by death."
Bathing in its waters,
Halāyudha-Balarāma,

35 Devoted to the twice-born,
distributed profuse gifts
to the Brahmins there.
It is here
that Bhagavān Pitāmaha Brahmā
created all the worlds,

36 And where, O Kaurava descendant,
strict-vowed Ārṣṭiṣeṇa
attained Brahminhood
after performing mahā-tapasyā,
for he was truly
the finest of ṛṣis.

37 This is the *tīrtha*
where rājā-ṛṣi Sindhudvīpa,
and Devāpi of mahā-tapasyā
became Brahmins,
where muni Viśvāmitra too
became a Brahmin,

38 For he was a *bhagavan*
of mahā-tapasyā,
tremendous energy,
and mahā-illustrious.
This is the *tīrtha*
where brave and valiant
Balabhadra-Balarāma
now arrived.

SECTION FORTY

1 "What tremendous tapasyā
did *bhagavan* Ārṣṭiṣeṇa
and Sindhudvīpa practise
to become Brahmins?" asked Janamejaya.

2 O Brahmin! I am curious
to know also
what Devāpi and revered Viśvāmitra did
to become Brahmins."

3 O rājā! (replied Vaiśampāyana)
In the distant past,
in the Kṛta-yuga,
finest-of-the-twice-born Ārṣṭiṣeṇa
delighted in his studies
in a guru-kula.

4 O lord of the world!
O rājā!
He did not complete
his education
nor his study of the Vedas
in his guru's home.

5 O rājā! This greatly upset
mahā-tapasyā-practising Ārṣṭiṣeṇa,
but he attained success
in the wisdom
of the Vedas
by his severe tapasyā.

6 Acquiring the wisdom
of the Vedas
and achieving enlightened perfection,
that mahā-tapasyā-practising
finest of ṛṣis
gave three boons to the *tīrtha*.

7 "From this day,
any person who bathes in the *tīrtha*
of the mahā-river Sarasvatī
in this very spot
will receive all the fruits
of a horse-sacrifice.

8 From today, he will have
no fear of snakes.
From today,
with the least effort
he will obtain
the most fruit."

9 Saying this,
the mahā-radiant muni
attained heaven.
This is how illustrious
bhagavān Ārṣṭiṣeṇa
attained perfection.

10 Mahārāja! In that *tīrtha*,
at that time,
illustrious Sindhudvīpa
and Devāpi
also attained
Brahminhood.

11 *Tāta*! Dear one!
Kauśika-Viśvāmitra
also practised continuous tapasyā
with his senses
fully disciplined,
and attained Brahminhood.

12 O rājā! A maha-celebrated
Kṣatriya named Gādhi
once ruled this territory.
Illustrious Viśvāmitra
was the son
of Gādhi.

13 *Tāta*! Dear one!
Gādhi of the Kuśika dynasty
was a mahā-yogī rājā
of mahā-tapasyā.
Installing his son Viśvāmitra
on the throne,

14 He made up his mind
to give up his body.
His subjects *praṇāma*-ed him,
saying: "O mahā-wise king!
Do not leave us.
Save us from fear and danger."

15 The assurance that Gādhi
gave his subjects
was this:
"My son
will be the protector
of the entire world."

16 O rājā! Saying this,
Gādhi made Viśvāmitra
sit on the throne.
He went to heaven,
and Viśvāmitra
was now king.

17 He tried hard enough,
but failed
to protect his subjects.
News reached him
one day that rākṣasas
were terrorising his kingdom.

18 He set out with his four-fold army,
and arrived,
far from his capital,
at the ashram
where lived
the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha.

19 O rājā! What havoc
and mischief
his soldiers caused there!
Bhagavān Vasiṣṭha,
who was away,
arrived just then

20 At the ashram,
and saw the mahā-forest
despoiled and devastated.
Mahārāja!
Finest-of-munis Vasiṣṭha
was outraged.

21 He said to his cow:
"Create an army
of fierce Śabaras!"
Ordered by him,
she produced a horde
of monstrous barbarians.

22 They attacked Viśvāmitra's army
and scattered it
in all directions.
When Gādhi's son Viśvāmitra
saw that his army
had been routed,

23 He decided nothing was higher
than tapasyā;
so he devoted himself to tapasyā.
O rājā!
On that Sarasvatī *tīrtha*,
concentrating his mind,

24 He started emaciating
his body
with fasting and mortification,
subsisting on water,
or on air,
or tree-leaves,

25 Sleeping on the bare ground,
and practising
many other self-disciplines.
The gods tried
in many ways
to frustrate him,

26 But the single-minded dedication
of the intellect
of māhātmā Viśvāmitra
never strayed.
Such was the intensity
of his multifoliate tapasyā

27 That Gādhi's son dazzled
like the splendour
of the sun itself.
Observing the dedication
of Viśvāmitra's tapasyā,
Pitāmaha-Brahmā,

28 The mahā-radiant-and-
powerful granter of boons,
decided to grant him a boon.
O rājā!
The boon he asked was:
"Make me a Brahmin."

29 The grandfather of all the worlds,
Sarva-loka-pitāmaha Brahmā said:
"*Tatheti*! So be it!"
Made Brahmin
by his intense tapasyā,
mahā-illustrious

30 Viśvāmitra
roamed the world over
like a god.
At that excellent *tīrtha*
Balarāma gifted
profuse wealth,

31 Milch cows
and vehicles and beds
and robes
and ornaments
and delicious food
and other articles,

32 Happily, O rājā! Then,
receiving the pūjā-respect
of the twice-born,
Balarāma proceeded to Baka's ashram,
where, I have heard,
Dalbhya's son Baka practised severe tapasyā.

SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 O rājā! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
from the Brahmin-making *tīrtha*,
Yādava Balarāma proceeded
to Dalbhya-Baka's Avākīrṇa *tīrtha*,

[IX:41:2-7]

Transcreated by P. Lal

2 Where Baka of mahā-tapasyā
emaciated his body and offered
as a libation in the sacred fire
the kingdom of Vicitravīrya's son
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, such was the gross intensity
of his tapasyā.

3 It was a libation poured in anger
by the mahā-illustrious
dharmātmā Baka.
Long ago,
the ṛṣis of Naimiṣa forest performed
a twelve-year *satra*-sacrifice.

4 When that was completed,
and the Viśvajit ritual
also completed,
the ṛṣis went to Pāñcāla,
where they asked the king
for wealth as *dakṣiṇā*.

5 O rājā! From the Pāñcālas
they received twentyone sturdy,
disease-free calves.
Dalbhya's son said
to the mahā-ṛṣis:
"Divide these calves among yourselves.

6 I shall ask
that finest of rājās
for more."
Saying this, O rājā,
to all the ṛṣis,
the illustrious

7 Finest of Brahmins
went to the palace
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Approaching
the lord-of-men
Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

8 Dalbhy's son asked
for some animals.
This angered Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Some royal cattle
had mysteriously died.
The excellent king said:

9 "Scoundrelly Brahmin!
Take these, if you like.
And don't delay.
Hearing this
the dharma-knowing ṛṣi
reflected:

10 "Aho! How shameful
that he has spoken like this
in the open court!"
Lost in thought
for some time, the enraged
finest-of-the-twice-born

11 Dālbhya decided
that he would destroy
the earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Slicing the corpses
into chunks of meat,
that finest-of-munis

12 Offered them in the sacred fire
as libations
of lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kingdom.
Lighting the fire
in the Avākīrṇa *tīrtha*
of the Sarasvatī river,

13 Dalbhya's son Baka, mahārāja,
as enjoined by tradition,
firm in his belief,
that practiser of mahā-tapasyā
offered the chunhs of meat
representing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kingdom.

14

O king! The break-up
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kingdom
began
with the commencement
of that horrific
satra-sacrifice.

15

O radiant one!
Like a forest sustematically
decimated by the axe,
the kingdom
of earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra
faced ruin –

16

And the prospect
upset him so deeply
that he lost consciousness.
That ruler of men,
seeing his kingdom
in such distress,

17

O rājā, revolved the matter
in his mind,
and decided
to take the help
of Brahmins
to resolve the crisis.

18

O defectless one!
But nothing helped.
Day by day
the kingdom declined,
and grief overcame
the king and the Brahmins.

19

O king Janamejaya!
Finding all his efforts
to save his kingdom
proving to be futile,
the king sought the advice
of *prāśni*-specialists.

20 They reminded him of his refusal
to give animals
to the muni Baka,
who was now offering
meat-chunks in the sacred fire
to destroy his kingdom.

21 "You kingdom is slowly
wasting away.
This mahā-calamity
is the result
of the mahā-tapasyā
of Baka.

22 Gratify him, O earth-lord!
He dwells near
the copious-watered river Sarasvatī."
Rājā Baka
went to the bank of the Sarasvatī
to meet Baka.

23 O bull-brave Bharata!
Touching the earth with his head,
and doing *prāñjali*
with folded palms,
he said: "My fault, *bhagavan.*
Forgive me. Be gracious.

24 I am mean and greedy,
a mindless fool.
You are my refuge.
You are my lord.
I beg of you –
be gracious to me."

25 The sense-numbing grief
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
stirred Baka to pity,
and he decided
to free the kingdom
from devastation.

26 Ṛṣi Baka was pleased.
    Discarding his anger,
he made preparations
    for another yajña,
this time
    for freeing the kingdom.

27 This is the way
    Dālbhya-Baka
saved the kingdom,
    received many animals,
and joyfully returned
    to the Naimiṣa forest.

28 And mahā-minded mahātmā
    Dhṛtarāṣṭra also,
O rājā, was restored
    to normal health,
and he returned
    to his prosperous capital.

29 Mahārāja! In the same *tīrtha*,
    for the well-being
of the gods, and the ruin
    of the anti-gods,
large-minded
    Bṛhaspatī himself

30 Offered flesh-libations
    in the sacred fire.
This debilitated the anti-gods,
    and they were massacred
in battle
    by the victory-seeking gods.

31 Here also mahā-illustrious Balarāma
    gave away,
to Brahmins,
    horses and elephants,
and carriages pulled
    by mules,

32 Expensive gems,
and other wealth too,
of all kinds.
O lord of the world!
Then mahā-powerful Balarāma
went to Yayāti *tīrtha*.

33 Mahārāja! In the distant past,
Nahusa's son mahātmā Yayatī
performed
a yajña here,
and Sarasvatī produced for him
streams of milk and ghee.

34 Profoundly pleased,
tiger-among-men
lord-of-the-earth Yayāti
attained the higher region,
and from there
obtained much merit.

35 *Prabhu*! Lord!
Pleased by the generosity
and deathless bhaktī
of rājā Yayatī,
whenever he performed
a yajña,

36 Sarasvatī provided
to all the Brahmins there
the fulfilment of every desire.
Whoever was present,
and whoever came
to that yajña –

37 Supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī gave
to each and every one
homes, beds,
seats, delicious food,
and other comforts.

38 To the Brahmins,
it was the rājā himself
who distributed such gifts,
and they praised rājā Yayāti
and gave him
their blessings.

39 The gods and gandharvas
were also delighted
with the lavish gifts.
As for mortals –
the boundless generosity
struck them dumb.

40 Whose flag
is mahā-dharma
Symbolled
with the palmyra-tree
Mahā-ātmaned mahātma
Firm-ātmaned Kṛtātmā
Patient-ātmaned Dhṛtātmā
Disciplined-ātmaned jitātmā
Always-mahā-generous
Proceeded next to Vasiṣṭha-pravāha
Where Sarasvatī flows fast and furious.

SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 "Why is the Sarasvatī
so fast and furious
at Vasiṣṭha-pravāha?"
asked Janamejaya.
"Why did the supreme-among-streams
carry away the ṛṣi?

2 *Prabhu*! Lord!
Why did they quarrel?
O mahā-wise one!
Tell me all.
I never tire
of listening to you."

3 O descendant of Bharata!
 (replied Vaiśampāyana)
It was tapasyā, O rājā,
 that created this
mahā-bitterness between
 Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha.

4 Vasiṣṭha's āshram was located
 on the Sthāṇu *tīrtha*
of the Sarasvatī,
 and on the opposite bank
was the āshram
 of profoundly intelligent Viśvāmitra.

5 Mahārāja! Severe tapasyā
 was practised
by Sthāṇu-Śiva
 at that spot –
that is what I have heard
 learned men say.

6 *Prabhu*! Lord! Where Bhagavān Sthāṇu-Śiva
 performed a yajña
and offered pūjā
 to Sarasvatī –
that place is celebrated
 as Sthāṇu-*tīrtha*.

7 O lord of men!
 That is the place
where the gods installed
 as their general
the destroyer of the enemies
 of the gods – Skanda.

8 On that very Sarasvatī *tīrtha*,
 mahā-muni Viśvāmitra,
with the power of his tapasyā,
 agitated and afflicted Vasiṣṭha.
How that happened,
 let me tell you.

9 O descendant of Bharata!
Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha
were both rich in tapasyā,
and every day
challenged each other
as to who was superior.

10 Mahā-muni Viśvāmitra
was the more jealous
of the two.
Seeing the radiance of Vasiṣṭha
often put him
in melancholy contemplation.

11 O descendant of Bharata!
He was devoted to dharma,
but a thought
occurred to him:
If the river Sarasvatī
could sweep tapasyā-rich

12 Vasiṣṭha on her swift current
to my shore,
I will finish off
that excellent twice-born
tapasyā champion.
No doubt of that.

13 Mahā-munī Bhagavān Viśvāmitra
made up his mind.
His eyes flamed with anger.
Mentally he invoked
the supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī.

14 Invoked by the muni,
lovely Sarasvatī
became deeply troubled.
A mahā-powerful muni
invoking her!
A mahā-angry muni!

15 As sorrow-stricken as the wife
of a dead hero,
she said
to that finest of munis:
"What do you
want me to do?"

16 She was pale, she was trembling,
lovely Sarasvatī,
as she stood before
the finest of munis Viśvāmitra,
her hands folded
in *añjali*.

17 The irascible muni said:
"Bring Vāsiṣṭha muni
to me immediately!
I will kill him."
The river heard him,
and she was terrified.

18 Hands folded in *añjali*,
the lotus-eyed lady
shuddered in fear,
like a creeper
swaying
in a violent wind.

19 Seeing the mahā-river
swaying uncontrollably,
the muni said:
"Don't question me.
Don't think. Bring Vāsiṣṭha
to me immediately."

20 She heard him;
she knew the evil
in his mind.
She also knew
the incomparable power
of Vāsiṣṭha.

21 Finest-of-rivers
Sarasvatī went
to percipient Vāsiṣṭha
and repeated to him
what Viśvāmitra
had ordered here

22 Fearing curses from both,
she trembled
again and again;
she was terrified
specially by thoughts of
ṛṣi Viśvāmitra's mahā-curse.

23 O rājā! Seeing her
frail and forlorn
and anxiety-stricken,
finest-of-men
dharmātmā Vāsiṣṭha
said to her:

24 "Supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī!
O swift-flowing lady!
Take me to him. Save yourself!
Don't think twice.
He will curse you if you don't."

25 O Kaurava Janamejaya!
She heard
his compassionate words,
and she thought:
"What should I do?
What is best for all?"

26 It occurred to her:
"Vāsiṣṭha has been
very kind to me.
Whatever I do,
must be
for his welfare."

27

O rājā! Seeing the finest-of ṛṣis,
Kuśika's son Viśvāmitra
absorbed
in japa-meditation
and yajña-performance,
Sarasvatī thought –

28

The finest-of-rivers
thought this to be
the best time,
and she burst her bank,
and bore
Vāsiṣṭha away.

29

Mitrā-Varuṇa's son
Vāsiṣṭha floated,
on those flooding waters.
O rājā! As he floated,
he chanted
in praise of Sarasvatī:

30

"Lady of the waters
Sarasvatī!
Born of the Lake of Brahmā
Sarasvatī!
Purifier of the world
Sarasvatī!

31

Maker of clouds in the sky
Devī Sarasvatī!
You are the waters everywehre,
Sarasvatī!
Wise are we through you
Sarasvatī!

32

Puṣṭi, Dyuti, Kīrti, Siddhi, Umā,
are you, Sarasvatī!
Health, Radiance, Fame, Success, Umā
are you, Sarasvatī!
Vānī and Svāhā and this world
are you, Sarasvatī!

33 You are the four-formed one
in all creatures
Sarasvatī!"
O rājā! Sarasvatī listened
to the maharṣi's
song of praise

34 And bore him on her current
to the ashram
of Viśvāmitra.
Repeatedly
she announced to Viśvāmitra:
"The muni is here."

35 Viśvāmitra saw Vāsiṣṭha
brought before him
by Sarasvatī and,
livid with anger,
began look for a weapon
with which to kill him.

36 Seeing his fury, and afraid
of Brahmin-murder,
Sarasvatī swept
Vāsiṣṭha away
to the safety
of her eastern bank.

37 She obeyed the words of both,
but she tricked
Gādhi's son Viśvāmitra.
Seeing
finest of-ṛṣis Vāsiṣṭha
swept out of his grasp,

38 Viśvāmitra, frustrated and infuriated,
said:
"Supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī!
You deceived me,
and you went away.

39 May your waters turn
into blood, the blood
that rākṣasas love."
This curse
of percipient Viśvāmitra
made the Sarasvatī

40 Flow in currents of blood
mixed with water
for one whole year.
And ṛṣis
and gods and gandharvas
and apsarās

41 Were appalled by what
had happened
to Sarasvatī.
O lord of men!
That is why that spot
is known in the world
as Vāsiṣṭha-pravāha
the Vāsiṣṭha-flow.

42 After this,
finest-of-rivers
Sarasvatī reverted
to her normal course.

SECTION FORTY-THREE

1 O rājā! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Cursed by percipient Viśvāmitra,
Sarasvatī became a river of blood
in those excellent radiant *tīrthas.*

2 O descendant of Bharata!
And rākṣasas turned up there,
drinking the blood, and happily
occupying those sacred places.

3 And they laughed and they danced,
those rākṣasas,
satiated with the blood,
carefree and ecstatic,
as if they had taken over
heaven itself.

4 O lord of the earth!
Time passed, and one day
some supremely
rich-in-tapasyā ṛṣis
came
to that Sarasvatī *tīrtha.*

5 After bathing in all
the other *tīrthas,*
those bull-brave munis,
all very learned,
eager for more tapasyā,
happily came

6 To the *tīrtha,* O rājā,
where the Sarasvatī
was a river of blood.
There,
the mahā-fortune-favoured ṛṣis
saw the gruesome

7 Spectacle of the Sarasvatī
turned
into a river of blood, and,
O finest of kings,
the rākṣasas merrily
drinking the blood.

8 O rājā! The sight
of all those rākṣasas
made the strict-vowed ṛṣis
take a momentous decision
on the bank
of the Sarasvatī.

9 All the mahā-vowed,
mahā-fortune-favoured ṛṣis,
in a group,
approached
the finest of streams Sarasvatī,
and said to her:

10 "Gracious one! Kalyāṇi!
Why are your waters
mixed with blood?
Tell us.
Once we know why,
we will take action."

11 Trembling as she spoke,
Sarasvatī told them
the entire story.
Seeing her in that piteous state,
the rich-in-tapasyā
ascetics said:

12 "O blameless one!
Now that we know
about the curse
and its cause,
we tapasyā-rich will do
what we can."

13 Saying this to supreme-among-streams
Sarasvatī,
they put their heads together
to devise a plan
to free Sarasvatī
from the curse.

14 With tapasyā, rigid routine,
fasts, painful vows,
and other forms
of ascetic discipline,
all those Brahmins,
O rājā,

15 Propitated Lord-of-the-world,
Lord-of-creatures
Mahādeva-Śiva,
and freed from her curse
supreme-among-streams
Devī Sarasvatī.

16 As a result of their efforts,
the river Sarasvatī
returned to normal,
and her water
became pure,
and flowed as before.

17 Curse-freed,
supreme-among-streams Sarasvatī
recovered her radiance.
Seeing the waters
of the Sarasvatī
purified by the munis,

18 The famished rākṣasas
approached the munis
and sought their protection.
O rājā!
Hands folded in *añjali*,
all those hungry rākṣasas

19 Supplicated those compassionate
munis again
and again:
"We are hungry.
We have fallen
from Sanātana Dharma.

20 The wicked deeds we do,
we do not do them
willingly and freely.
You were never kind to us,
and we never stopped
doing wicked deeds.

21 And so things got from bad to worse,
and we became
Brahmin-killing Brahma-rākṣasas.
Still worse,
sexual misbehaviour
made our women corrupt.

22 Even the Vaiśyas, Śūdras
and Kṣatriyas
of this world
started hating Brahmins
and turned
into rākṣasas.

23 They are rākṣasas too
of this world
who disrespect
ācāryas, *ṛtvik*-priests,
gurus
and elderly people.

24 O finest of the twice-born!
Rescue us
from this crisis,
for you have the power
to redeem even
the entire world."

25 Listening to the rākṣasas,
the single-minded munis
for their welfare
chanted this praise
of the mahā-river
Sarasvatī:

26 "Food sneezed upon,
touched by flies,
defiled ucchiṣṭha-food,
food with hair in it,
and food
served tearfully,

27 Food licked by a dog –
such food
is fit only for rākṣasas.
Learned men
stay away
from these kinds of food.

28 Who eats such food,
shall be taken
as an eater of rākṣasa-food."
Those tapasyā-rich
ṛṣis purified the water
of the *tīrtha*,

29 And requested the river Sarasvatī
to free
the rākṣasas.
Honouring the request
of the mahā-ṛṣis,
that finest of streams,

30 O bull-brave mortal,
transformed herself
into a new river, the Aruṇā.
Bathing in her,
the rākṣasas left their bodies
and attained heaven.

31 Bathing in her, mahārāja,
absolves the guilty
of Brahmin-murder.
It is said
that the rājā of the gods,
Śatakratu-Indra,

32 The hundred-sacrificed deity,
bathed in her
and was freed of such a crime.
"What made
Bhagavān Śakra-Indra,
guilty of Brahmin-murder,

33 Bathe in this *tīrtha*,
and be cleansed of his crime?"
asked Janamejaya.
O lord of men!
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
Listen to the story

34 Of how, in the distant past,
Vāsava-Indra
broke his promise to Namuci.
Afraid of Vāsava-Indra,
Namuci hid inside
the sun's rays.

35 Indra made friends with him
and promised him:
"With nothing wet,
with nothing dry,
not at night,
not in the day,

36 O finest of the anti-gods,
will I kill you.
O loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend,
I swear this truly."
Despite this, once,
in a fog, Lord

37 Vāsava-Indra, O rājā,
sliced Namuci's head,
using foam as his weapon.
Namuci's severed head
kept chasing
Śakra-Indra,

38 Shouting, "Bho! Bho!
Śakra-Indra,
you wicked friend-killer!"
Pursued and accused
again and again
by the sliced head,

39 Exasperated Indra went
to Pitāmaha Brahmā
and confessed his crime.
World-guru Brahmā said:
"At Aruṇā-*tīrtha*,
as enjoined by tradition,

40 Perform a sacrifice and bathe there,
O Devendra-Indra,
and be free of your fearful crime.
The munis have made
its waters holy,
O Śakra-Indra.

41 The river Aruṇā
for a long time
was present there, concealed.
Then Sarasvatī
came and her waters
swirled over Aruṇā-devī.

42 The confluence of Sarasvatī
and Aruṇā
is a *tīrtha* of mahā-holiness.
Perform a yajña there,
O Devendra-Indra,
and give generously.

43 Then bathe there, and you
will be freed
of your heinous crime."
O Janamejaya!
As instructed,
near the Sarasvatī's waters

44 He performed the ritual,
and then he bathed
in the Aruṇā;
and in this way
he was absolved
of Brahmin-murder.

45 With a happy heart,
the lord of heaven
returned to heaven.
O descendant of Bharata!
O finest of rājās!
And the head of Namuci
dipped in the river
and attained the all-
wish-fulfilling realm.

46 And mahātmā Balarāma,
supreme-deed-doer
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
bathed in that *tīrtha*,
and gave away gifts
as dharma dictated,
after which he proceeded
to the mahā-meritorious
tīrtha called Soma.

47 That is the *tīrtha*
where in the past
Indra-of-earth-*lords*
Soma performed
the Rājasūya yajña,
the yajña whose hotṛ-
priest was the finest-
of-the-twice-born
mahātmā Atri.

48 When that yajña gave over,
a horrific battle
took place between
the gods and the Dānavas,
Daityas and rākṣasas –
a battle that is known
as Tāraka in which
the anti-god Tāraka
was killed by Skanda.

49 That was the time
when the destroyer of Daityas,
Mahāsena-Skanda,
became the general
of the army of the gods.
There, beneath a *plakṣa*-rājā
huge waved-leaf fig-tree
Kārtikeya-Kumāra-Skanda
is present in person.
Always.

SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 "O finest-of-the-twice-born!"
asked Janamejaya.
"You have described the glory
of Sarasvatī.
Brahmin! Describe Kumāra-
Skanda's installation.

2 O finest of eloquent speakers!
Bhagavān Skanda's
installation as general –
where, when,
who, and how
was it done?

3 Tell me in exact detail
how Skanda
achieved the mahā-massacre
of Daitya-antigods.
I am bursting with curiosity
to hear it."

4 Janamejaya! (said Vaiśampāyana)
Your curiosity
becomes a Kaurava descendant.
I am delighted
to hear you say
what you have said.

5 O lord of men!
Because you show
such deep interest,
I will happily describe
Kumāra-Skanda's installation
and prowess.

6 This happened long ago.
The semen of Maheśvara-Śiva
spilled
in a fire.
Even all-consuming Bhagavān Agni
could not consume it.

7 The oblation-carrying fire deity
blazed
with additional radiant energy
as a result –
an energy so spectacular
it was intollerable.

8 Unable to carry
that refulgent embryo,
Lord Agni, with the permission of Brahma,
cast
that sun-dazzling embryo
in the Gaṅgā's waters.

9 And Gaṅgā also,
unable to bear that embryo,
transported it to a peak
of the god-adored
Himālayas,
and abandoned it there.

10 That son of blazing fire
grew up there,
dazzling the three worlds.
The six Kṛttikās
saw that new-born child
of refulgent splendour,

11 That child of flame,
that mahātmā lord,
lying in a clump of reeds.
Each wanted a baby,
and each said, "My child!"
"My child!"

12 Bhagavān Prabhu Skanda
read their minds
and, assuming six mouths,
he sucked
their breasts
which were spilling with milk.

13 The divinely enchanting
six Kṛttika devis
saw the marvellous feat
of the baby
and were struck
with amazement.

14 O finest of the Kauravas!
And the peak
on which had abandoned
the bhagavan baby
suddenly blazed forth
with golden splendour.

15 And the growing baby
irradiated the earth
with silvery brilliance,
and all the mountains
shone with the glory
of gold.

16 That supremely mahā-valiant boy
was known
as Kumāra-Kārtikeya-Skanda.
That mahā-yoga.
powerful child was at first
Gāṅgeya, "Gaṅgā's child".

17 O Indra-among-rājās!
And the boy grew up,
magnificent in discipline
and tapasyā and energy,
and as lovely to look at
as the moon.

18 And the beautiful boy
lay in the divinely
golden clump of reeds,
lulled to sleep
by praises chanted
by gandharvas and munis.

19 And thousands of celestial girls
skilled
in music and dance
sang the praises
of the beautiful boy
and danced for him.

20 And finest of rivers
would come
and sit near the boy-god.
And the earth Pṛthivī,
exquisitely dressed,
cradled the boy in her lap.

21 Bṛhaspati performed the birth rituals
of the child,
and the Vedas,
in four-fold manifestation,
stood before him with hands
folded in *añjali*.

22 The four-fold science of war,
Dhanurveda, complete
with all weapons and missiles,
stood before him –
indeed, Vāṇī-Sarasvatī herself,
the goddess of learning.

23 And Skanda saw
the mahā-valiant God-of-gods
consort-of-Umā Devadeva
Umāpati Śiva, surrounded
by Bhūta-followers, seated
with mountain-born Umā.

24 And his bands of *bhūta*-followers
were weird-looking,
malformed, crooked and
grotesque; and strange
too were their dresses
and ornaments.

25 Weird were their faces too:
tiger-like, lion, bear,
cat, *makara*-monster,
wildcat as well,
and elephant
and camel,

26 And owl-faces also,
vultures and jackals;
some had faces
of *krauñaca*-cranes,
ranku-deer
and pigeons.

27 Some had the bodies of
porcupines, wolves,
lizards and iguanas,
and goats,
and sheep,
and even cows.

28 Some looked like clouds,
some like mountains.
They wielded *cakras* and maces.
Some collyrium-black,
some sonow-white –
a fascinating spectacle!

29 O lord of the world!
Seven Mātrikās: Brāhmī,
Maheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Kaumari, Indrāṇī,
Varāhī, Cāmuṇḍī;
Sādhyas, Viśvas, Maruts,
Vasus and *pitṛ*-ancestors;

30 Rudras, Ādityas, Siddhas,
Bhujaṅga-serpents,
Dānava-antigods,
Khagā-birds; Bhagavān
Self-Born Svayambhū Brahmā
and his sons; and Viṣṇu;

31 And Śakra-Indra all came
to see the boy
of undiminishing glory.
Finest-among-gods –
and-gandharvas
Nārada, leading

32 The deva-ṛṣis, and Bṛhaspati
leading the Siddhas;
greater than all the world,
and gods who are greater
than even the gods –
the *pitṛ*-ancestors;

33 And all the bands of
Yāmās and Dhāmās
had also come there.
He was only a child,
but by the puissant power
of his mahā-yoga,

34 He approached Lord-of-the-gods,
trident-and-pināka-bow-wielding
Śiva.
Seeing him coming,
Śiva had only this thought
in his mind,

35

As had mountain-born Umā,
and Gaṅgā
and Pāvaka-Agni:
"Who among us
will this child
honour first?

36

Will he come to me?"
This was uppermost
in the mind of each.
Reading their minds,
Skanda assumed
four separate forms,

37

By the power of yoga
splitting his body.
In a flash,
Prabhu Bhagavān Skanda
was one
and also four:

38

Skanda in front,
and Śākha, Viśakha
and Naigameya behind him.
Having made himself
into four,
Prabhu Bhagavān

39

Wind-formed Bhagavān
Skanda-Śākha went
towards Vibhāvasu-Agni,
and flame-dazzling
Skanda-Naigameya
went towards Gaṅgā.

40

Wind-formed Bhagavān
Skanda-Śākha went
towards Vibhāvasu-Agni,
and flame-dazzling
Skanda-Naigameya
went towards Gaṅgā.

41 All the four forms
were identical,
all equally resplendent,
all four approached
simultaneously –
an incredible phenomenon!

42 Seeing that mahā-astonishing,
unbelievable,
and horripilating happening,
the gods, Dānavas
and rākṣasa spontaneously
exclaimed, "Hai! Hai!"

43 Rudra-Śiva, Umā devī,
Pāvaka-Agni
and Gaṅgā together
approached Lord-of-the world
Jagatpati Pitāmaha Brahmā
and *praṇāma*-ed him.

44 O bull-brave rājā!
After *praṇāma-ing* Brahmā,
for the good
of Kārtikeya-Skanda,
they said, O rājā,
to Brahmā:

45 "O Lord of the gods!
Revered one!
Bhagavan! Favour us,
and grant the boy
the power and authority
he desires and deserves."

46 Grandfather-of-all-the-worlds
Sarva-loka-pitāmaha
percipient Bhagavān Brahmā
reflected to himself:
"What power and authority
should I grant him?"

[IX:44:47-52]

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47 To the gods, gandharvas,
rākṣasas, bhūtas, yakṣas,
birds and Pannaga-serpents –
every kind
of power and glory
he had granted

48 Earlier, distributed among
these mahātmās.
Now mahā-minded Brahmā
decided to grant
power and glory
to Skanda.

49 O Bharata descendant!
It took only moments
for Brahmā to deside,
in that gathering of gods,
to instal Skanda general
of all the celestials.

50 And to all the rājā-gods
of the gathering,
Pitāmaha Brahmā's order
was
that they should serve
and obey Skanda.

51 The gods, led by Brahmā,
escorted Kumāra-Skanda
to the Indra-among-mountains
Himālayas
for the ceremony
of the installation –

52 To the world-celebrated *tīrtha*,
the Samanta-pañcaka,
the source of the supreme-
among-streams
Sarasvatī devī
in the holy Himālayas.

53 On the sacred bank
of the Sarasvatī,
the gods and gandharvas
gathered, their minds
at peace in that all-guṇa-
resplendent holy site.

SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 Collecting the śāstra-ordained essentials
for the installation
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Bṛhaspati lit the sacred fire.

2 Skanda was ensconced
in a magnificent gem-studded seat,
glittering with celestial jewels,
provided by Himavat.

3 And the gathering of gods
approached Skanda
with auspicious offerings
and chanting mantras
for the installation,
as ordained by tradition.

4 Mahā-valiant Indra and Viṣṇu,
Sūrya-Sun
and Candrama-Moon,
Dhātā and Vidhātā,
Anila-Wind
and Anala-Fire;

5 Pūṣā, Bhaga,
Aryama, Aṃṣa,
Vivasvān,
and, wise Rudra-Śiva
accompanied by
Mitra and Varuṇa;

6 Eleven Rudras, eight Vasus,
twelve Ādityas,
and the twin Aśvins
surrounded Prabhu Lord Skanda.
Viśvadevas, the Maruts,
the Sādhyas and pitṛs;

7 Gandharvas, apsarās,
yakṣas, rākṣasas,
Pannagas,
innumerable deva-ṛṣis,
as well as
Brahma-ṛṣis;

8 Vaikhānas, Vālakhilyas,
munis living on air,
munis living on sunrays,
many descendants
of Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras,
mahātmā *yati*-ascetics;

9 Serpents, Vidyādharas,
purified and yoga-
perfected mahātmās,
Pitāmaha Brahmā,
Pulastya, and Pulaha
of mahā-tapasyā;

10 Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa,
Atri, Marīci,
and Bhṛgu,
Kratu, Hara,
Pracetas-Varuṇa,
Manu, Dakṣa;

11 Ṛtu-Seasons, Graha-Planets,
Jyotīṣi-Luminaries,
and, O lord of the world,
the embodied Rivers,
and the Sanātana
eternal Vedas;

12 The Oceans, the Lakes,
the various *Tīrthas*,
Pṛthivī-Earth,
Dyu-Sky-Realm,
Diśa-Directions, Trees,
O lord of men;

13 Deva-mātā Aditi,
the mother of the gods
Hṛī-Modesty, Śrī-Prosperity,
Sarasvatī, Umā,
Sacī, Sinivālī,
Anumati, Kuhū;

14 Rākā, Dhiṣaṇā,
the wives of the gods,
the Himālayas,
the Vindhya mountains,
radiant-with-many-peaks
Meru-mountain;

15 Airāvata
and his followers,
Kalā, Kāṣṭhā, the Month,
the Fortnight, the Seasons,
and, O king,
Day and Night;

16 Finest-of-heroes
Uccaḥśravas,
the serpent-rājā Vāsuki,
Aruṇa, Garuḍa,
Forests
and Auṣadha-Vegetation;

17 Bhagavān Dharma deva,
Kāla and Yama
and Mṛtyu,
and the followers of Kāla –
all were present
on the occasion.

18 I have not given a list
of all who came –
there were so many –
but all classes of gods
came to the ceremony
of Kumāra-Skanda's installation.

19 O rājā! The gods carried
in their hands
many auspicious articles
of great value,
needed for the installation
of Skanda.

20 O king! Carrying water
from the seven Sarasvatīs,
sacred water,
in golden jars,
and bringing with them
expensive offerings,

21 The gods were delighted
to participate
in the installation ceremony
of Senāpati Kumāra-Skanda,
the mahātmā
scourge of the antigods.

22 Mahārāja! As in the past,
at the installation
of Lord-of-waters
Jaleśvara-Varuṇa,
so now Lord-of-the-worlds
Bhagavan Brahmā,

23 Mahā-radiant Kaśyapa
and others anointed
world-celebrated Skanda.
Brahmā joyfully gave Skanda
four powerful,
wind-swift assistants,

24 Perfect companions,
able to summon energy
at will, whenever desired:
first, Nandisena;
second, Lohitāksa;
third, respected Ghaṇṭākarṇa;

25 The fourth follower known
as the famed
Kumudamālin.
Prabhu Sthāṇu-Śiva
gave to Skanda
a magnificent follower,

26 Weaver of hundreds
of magical māyās,
hugely powerful, summoning
energy as and when
desired, and annihilator of
the enemies of the gods.

27 In the battle between
the gods and the antigods,
with his two hands
this infuriated
fierce-deed-door slew
fourteen million Daityas.

28 And the gods gave
to Skanda the invincible
Nairṛta army,
looking like Viṣṇu himself,
and capable of exterminating
the enemies of the gods.

29 And Vāsava-Indra
and the gods, gandharvas,
yakṣas, rākṣasas
and munis
together shouted:
"Victory to Skanda!"

30 And Yama gave Skanda
two followers,
Unmātha and Pramātha
both as mahā-powerful
and mahā-radiant
as Kāla.

31 And the sun-god Sūrya
joyfully parted
with two of his own
followers –
Subhrāja and Bhāsvara –
giving them to Skanda.

32 And Soma the moon gave
two followers
to Skanda –
Maṇi and Sumaṇi –
both fair-skinned, wearing white
garlands, dazzling like Kailāsa.

33 And Hutāśana-Agni gave
Skanda two
brave followers –
Jvalajihva and Jyoti –
both expert at crushing
enemy armies.

34 Parigha, Vaṭa,
more-than-mahā-powerful Bhīma,
Dahati and Dahana –
all five
fearfully valiant
and charged with energy –

35 These five followers
were gifted by Aṁśa
to percipient Skanda.
Thunderbolt-and-rod-
wielding Utkrośa
and Pañcaka

36 Were gifted to Skanda
by slayer-of-hostile-heroes
Vāsava-Indra.
They had killed in battle
many enemies
of Mahendra-Indra.

37 Mahā-illustrious Viṣṇu
gave Skanda
three followers:
Cakra,
Vikrama,
and Saṁkrama.

38 The-masters-of-all-learning,
the twin Aśvins
joyfully gave Skanda
two followers:
Vardhana
and Nandana.

39 Mahā-illustrious Dhātā
gave mahātmā Skanda
five followers:
Kunda, Kusuma,
Kumuda, Ḍambara,
and Āḍambara.

40 Tvaṣṭṛ gave Skanda
two followers –
Cakra and Anacakra –
both powerful,
both cloud-cakra-wielders
and mahā-māyā-makers.

41 Prabhu Lord Mitra gave
mahātmā Kumāra-
Skanda two mahā-ātmaned,
proficient-in-tapasyā-
and-learning followers:
Suvrata and Satyasaṁdha.

42 Both of them were handsome
granters of boons,
renowned in the three worlds.
Mahā-ātmaned
Suprabha
and Śubhakarman

43 Were the two world-famed
followers given
by Vidhātā to Kārtikeya-Skanda.
Makers-of-mahā-māyā
Pāṇītaka
and Kālika

44 Were the two followers,
O Bharata descendant,
Pūṣā gave to Kārtikeya-Skanda.
Mahā-faced
and mahā-powerful
Bala and Atibala

45 Were given by Vāyu,
O finest of the Bharatas,
to Kārtikeya-Skanda-
Mahā-powerful,
timi-fish-faced
Yama and Atiyama

46 Were given to Kārtikeya-Skanda
by firm-in-truthful-promise
Varuṇa.
Mahā-ātmaned
Suvarcas
and Ativarcas

47 Were given, O rājā,
by Himavat
to Hutāsana-Agni's son.
Mahā-ātmaned
Kāñcana
and Meghamālin

48 Were the two followers given,
O Bharata descendant,
to Agni's son by Meru.
Sthira and Atisthira
were another two
given by Meru,

49 The mahātmā mountain,
to Agni's son Skanda;
both were mahā-powerful
and illustrious.
Mahā-stone-wielders
Ucchṛṅga and Atiśṛṅga

50 Were the two followers
given by Vindhya
to Agni's son Skanda.
Mace-wielding
Saṁgraha
and Vigraha

51 Were the two mahā-folowers
given by Samudra
to Agni's son Skanda.
Unmāda,
Śaṅkukarṇa
and Puṣpadanta

52 Were given
to Agni's son
by lovely-to-look-at Pārvatī.
The two Nagas
Jaya and Mahajaya –
Agni's son Jvalana-suna

53 Skanda received these two,
O tiger-among-men
from the Pannaga-lord Vāsuki.
In this way,
Sādhyas, Rudras,
Vasus, *pitṛs*,

54 Seas and Rivers
and mahā-powerful Mountains
offered different
army leaders,
wielding *sūla*-lances,
paṭṭiṣa-pointed-spears,

55 And other celestial weapons
and missiles, and
variously dressed and ornamented.
Listen now
to the names
of Skanda's other soldiers

56 Who were variously armed,
variously dressed
and ornamented.
Śaṅkukarṇa,
Nikumbha, Padma,
and Kumuda;

57 Ananta, Dvādaśabhuja,
Kṛṣṇā, Upakṛṣṇa,
Ghrāṇaśravas,
Kapiskandha,
Kāṇcanakṣa,
Jalandhama;

58 Akṣa, Saṁtarjana,
Kunaedīka,
Tamo'antakrt,
Ekākṣa, Dvādaśākṣa,
Ekajaṭa,
and Prabhu;

59 Sahasrabāhu, Vikaṭa,
Vyāghrākṣa,
Kṣitikampana,
Puṇyanāmā, Sunāmā,
Sucakra,
Priyadarśana;

60 Pariśruta, Kokanada,
Priyamālyānulopana,
Ajodara,
Gajaśirā,
Skandākṣa,
Śatalocana;

61 Jvālājihva,
Karālāksa,
Sitikesa,
Jati, Hari,
Pariśruta, Kokanada,
Kṛṣṇākeśa, Jaṭādhara;

62 Caturdaṁṣṭra, Aṣṭajihva,
Meghanāda, Pṛthuśravā,
Vidyutākṣa,
Dhanurvaktra,
Jāṭhara,
Mārutāśana;

63 Jdārākṣa,
Rathākṣa
Vajranābha,
Vasuprabha,
Samudravega,
Śailakampī;

64 Vṛṣa, Meṣa,
Pravāha, Nanda
Upananda, Dhūmra,
Śveta, Kalinga,
Siddhārtha,
Varada;

65 Priyaka, Nanda,
illustrious Gonanda,
Ānanda,
Pramoda,
Svastika,
Dhruvaka;

66 Kṣemavāha
Suvāha,
Siddhapātra,
Govraja,
Kanakāpīḍa,
Mahāpariṣadeśvara;

67 Gāyana, Hasana,
Bāṇa,
valiant Khaṅga,
Vaitalī, Gatitālī,
Kathaka,
Vātika;

68 Haṁsaja, Paṅka-digdhāṅga,
Samudronmādana,
Raṇotkaṭa,
Prahāsa,
Śvetasiddha,
Nandana;

69 Kālakaṇṭha,
Prabhāsa,
Kumbhāndakodara,
Kālakaksa,
Sita,
Bhūtamathana;

70 Yajñavāha,
Suvāha, O Bharata descendant,
Devayājī,
Somapa, Majjāna,
Mahātejas,
Kratha and Krātha;

71 Tuhara and Tuhāra,
Parākramin,
Citradeva,
Madhura, Suprasāda,
Kiriṭin,
Mahābala;

72 Vatsala,
Madhuvarna,
Kalaśodara,
Dharmada,
Manmathakara,
valiant Sūcīvaktra;

73 Śvetavaktra,
Suvaktra,
Caruvaktra,
Pāṇḍura, Daṇḍabāhu,
Subāhu, Raja,
Kokilaka;

74 Acala, Kanakākṣa,
the Prabhu named Bālā,
Saṁcaraka,
Kokanada,
Gṛdhrapatra,
Jambuka;

75 Lohavaktra, Ajavaktra,
Javana, Kumbhavaktra,
Kumbhaka,
Svarṇagrīva,
Kṛṣṇanjā, Haṁsavaktra,
Candrabha;

76 Pāṇikūrca, Sambūka,
Pañcavaktra,
Śikṣaka, Cāṣavaktra,
Jambūka,
Śākavaktra,
and Kuñjala.

77 All these were firm-in-yoga,
mahā-ātmaned,
and gracious to Brahmins.
Apart from these
mahā-ātmaned mahā-followers,
Pitāmaha-Brahmā,

[IX:45:78-83]

Transcreated by P. Lal

78 O Janamejaya, also gave
to Kumāra-Skanda
thousands of children,
youths and elderly
companions devoted to follow
and serve him.

79 All of them had all kinds
of very different faces.
Listen, Janamejaya!
Tortoise-faces,
cock-faces, rabbit-faces,
owl-faces,

80 Donkey-faces, camel-faces,
and pig-faces.
O descendant of Bharata!
Cat-faces
and hare-faces
and long faces

81 And mongoose-faces
and night owl-faces
and crow-faces
and rat-faces
and monkey-faces
and peacock-faces,

82 And fish-faces and frog-faces
and sheep-faces
and goat-faces and buffalo-
faces and bear-faces
and tiger-faces and jackal-faces
and lion-faces,

83 And fearful elephant faces,
and nakra-fish-faces,
and Garuḍa-faces, and Kaṅka-
heron-faces,
and fox-faces
and raven-faces.

84 O descendant of Bharata!
Some had cow-faces,
bull-faces, mule-faces,
porcupine-faces. Mahā-
large bellies, feet and arms;
eyes like blinding stars.

85 Some had faces like pigeons,
like bulls,
and like kokilas
and hawks,
and some had faces
of *tittira*-partridges.

86 Some had lizard-faces.
Some were dressed
in pure white.
Some had spear-long faces;
some had angry faces,
some serene.

87 Some were dressed in bark,
Some were like
venomous snakes.
Some had cow-like nostrils.
Some were pot-bellied,
some lean, some huge.

88 Thick necks, large ears.
Some used snakes
as body ornaments.
Some were dressed
in elephant-hide,
some in black deerskin.

89 Some had mouths
on their shoulders,
others on their backs,
others on cheeks,
and some
even on their thighs,

90 Some on their calves,
and on various
other parts of their bodies.
The faces of some
resembled those of worms
and insects.

91 Some had many mouths,
some had serpent-mouths.
Some were many-armed
and many headed,
some had arms like tree-branches,
some were snake-fanged,

92 And snake-bodied.
Some were covered
with creepers and plants
and tree-bark –
and others were dressed
in golden robes.

93 So many kinds of dresses,
so many garlands,
so many unguents,
so many designs
and styles!
Some wore dresses of leather.

94 Some had turbans,
and some wore crowns or diadems.
Handsome necks!
Five-line-furrowed foreheads!
Some
were golden-haired.

95 Some had two, some theree,
some seven hair-tufts.
Some sported peacock-plumes,
some had crowns.
Some were shaven bald,
others had matted locks.

96 Some had lovely garlands,
 others were covered
with facial hair.
 How they loved to fight!
Even the excellent gods
 could not defeat them.

97 Some were pitch-dark,
 some had flesh-less faces,
protruding backs
 and sunken stomachs,
thick waists and thin waists
 big bellies and huge penises.

98 Some had massive arms, others puny.
 Some were dwarfs,
others hunchbacks
 with small thighs.
Some had necks and ears
 like those of elephants.

99 Some had noses
 like those of elephants
and tortoises and wolves
 Some breathed noisily,
were huge-thighed,
 head down-facing, ugly-looking.

100 Some were mahā-toothed,
 sme tiny-toothed,
others four-toothed.
 O rājā! Thousands of them
resembled fearsome
 Indras-among-elephants.

101 How symmetrical the bodies of some,
 dazzling with ornaments!
O descendant of Bharata,
 some were yellow-eyed,
conch-shell-eared,
 and red-rosed.

102 Small-toothed,
maha-toothed,
thick-lipped, blue-haired,-
feet, lips, teeth,
hands and necks
of all shapes and sizes.

103 O descendant of Bharata!
So many long-necked,
long-nailed, long-footed
and long-armed mahā-followers
rushed towards Skanda
from all sides.

104 Their bodies covered with
various leather dresses,
speaking various languages,
fluent in all
the languages of the land,
skilled conversationalists.

105 O descendant of Bharata!
Yellow-eyed, blue-necked,
long-eared; their body-hair
like the fur of wolves,
their skin as black
as collyrium.

106 White-eyed,
red-necked,
yellow-eyed too.
O Bharata rājā!
Attractive-coloured,
dappled-skinned too.

107 Some white like a chowrie-whisk,
some red-bodied,
some single-coloured,
some multi,
some as resplendent
as peacocks.

108 Let me now give you
the names
of the different weapons
wielded
by the followers of Skanda
who came at the end.

109 Some carried nooses,
some stood with averted faces,
same had donkey-faces,
eyes at their backs,
blue necks – their arms
were like *parigha*-iron-clubs.

110 O descendant of Bharata!
Some had *śataghnī*-firearms,
some carried cakras,
some clubs, some swords,
some *mudgara*-mallets,
some *danda*-rods.

111 Some sported maces
bhuśuṇḍi-firearms
and *tomara*-javelins –
varied were the weapons
of those mahā-energetic,
mahātmā warriors.

112 Mahā-powerful and mahā-swift
were
Skanda's mahā-followers.
Delighted to be present
at the installation were
these battle-loving warriors.

113 Networks of tiny bells adorned
the uniforms
of these mahā-zealous warriors,
O king!
They danced merrily;
and other mahā-followers also

114 Offered their loyal services
to the celebrated
mahātmā Kārtikeya-Skanda.
The dwellers of heaven,
inter-space and earth –
of radiant-as-fire

115 Heroic warrior Skanda,
with the permission
of the gods, they became
the loyal followers.
After the completion
of the installation ceremony,
hundreds of thousands
of crores of followers
surrounded mahātmā Skanda
and pledged allegiance.

SECTION FORTY-SIX

1 O rājā! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Listen to the names
of the foe-destroying Mātṛs, the divine
mother-companions of Kumāra-Skanda.

2 O descendant of Bharata!
These are the names
of the illustrious, gracious mother-goddesses
whose presence permeats the three worlds.

3 Prabhāvati, Viśālākṣi,
Pālitā,
Gostanī,
Śrīmatī,
Bahulā,
and Bahuputrikā;

4 Apsu-jātā, Gopālī,
Bṛhadambālikā
Jayavati,
Mālatikā,
Dhruvaratnā,
Bhayaṁkarī;

5 And, O descendant of Bharata,
Vasudāmā, Dāmā,
Viśokā,
Nandinī,
Ekacūda,
Cakranemi;

6 Uttejani, Jayatsena,
Kamalākṣī,
Śobhanā, Śatruñjayā,
Krodhanā,
Śalabhī,
Kharī;

7 And, O descendant of Bharata,
Mādhavi, Śubhavaktrā,
Tīrthanemi,
Gītapriyā, Kalyaṇī,
Rudraromā,
Amitāśanā;

8 Also, O descendant of Bharata,
Meghasvanā,
Bhogavatī, Subhru,
Kanakāvatī, Alātākṣī,
Vīryavatī,
Vidyujjihvā;

9 Padmāvatī,
Sunakṣatrā,
Kandarā,
Bahuyojanā,
Saṁtānikā, and, O Kaurava,
Kamalā, Mahābatā;

10 Sudāmā,
Bahudāmā,
Suprabhā, and, O Indra-among-rājās,
Yaśasvinī,
Nṛtyapriyā,
Śatolūkhalamekhalā;

11 And, O descendant of Bharata,
Śataghaṇṭā,
Śatānandā, Bhaganandā,
Bhāvinī,
Vapuṣmatī, Candrasītā,
Bhadrakālī;

12 Ṛkṣāmbikā, Niṣkuṭikā,
Vāmā, Catvaravāsinī,
Sumaṅgalā,
Svastimati,
Buddhikāmā,
Jayapriyā;

13 Dhanadā,
Suprasādā,
Bhavadā, Jalesvarī,
Edī and Bheḍī
and Sameḍī,
Vetālajananī;

14 And, O descendant of Bharata,
Kaṇḍūtikālikā,
Devamitrā, Vasuśrī,
Koṭarā,
Citrasenā,
and Acalā;

15 And, O king Janamejaya,
Kukkutikā,
Śaṅkha, Śakunikā,
Kuṇḍārikā
Kaukulikā, Kumbhikā,
Śatodarī;

16 Utkrāthinī, Jalelā,
Mahāvegā,
Kankanā, Manojavā,
Kaṇṭakinī,
Pradhasā,
and Pūtanā;

17 Keśayantrī, Truṭi,
Vāmā, Krośanā,
Taḍitprabhā, Mandodarī,
Muṇḍī,
Koṭarā,
and Meghavāhinī;

18 Subhagā, Lambinī,
Lambā,
Tāmracūḍā, Vikāśinī,
Ūrdhvaveṇīdharā,
Piṅgākṣī,
and Lohamekhalā;

19 Pṛthuvastrā,
Madhulikā, Madhukumbhā,
Pakṣālikā,
Matkulikā,
Jarāyu,
Jarjarānanā;

20 And, O king Janamejaya,
Khyātā, Dahadahā,
Dhamadhamā; also,
O Indra-among-rājās,
Khaṇḍakhaṇḍā, Puṣaṇā,
Maṇikuṭṭikā;

21 And, O Kaurava,
Amoghā,
Lambapayodharā,
Venuvīṇādharā,
Piṅgākṣī,
and Lohamekhalā;

22 Śaśolūkamukhī, Kṛṣṇā,
Kharajaṅghā,
Mahājavā,
Śiśumāramukhī,
Śvetā, Lohitākṣī,
Vibhīṣaṇā;

23 And, O bharata descendant,
Jaṭālikā,
Kāmacarī, Dīrghajihva,
Balotkaṭā,
Kālekikā, Vāmanikā,
and Mukuṭā;

24 Also, O Bharata descendant,
Lohitākṣī,
Mahākāyā, Haripiṇḍā-Bhūmipa,
Ekatvacā,
Sukusumā,
and Kṛṣṇākarṇī;

25 Kṣurakarṇi,
Catuṣkarṇī,
Karṇaprāvaraṇā,
Catuṣpathaniketā,
Gokarṇī,
Mahiṣānanā;

26 Kharakarṇī, Mahākarṇī,
Bherisvanā,
Mahāsvanā,
Śaṅkhakumbhaśravā,
Bhagadā,
Mahābalā;

27 Gaṇā and Sugaṇā,
Abhīti,
Kāmadā,
Catuspatharatā,
Bhutitīrthā,
Anyagocarī;

28 And, O Bharata descendant,
Paśudā, Vittadā,
Sukhadā, Mahāyaśā,
Payodā,
Gomahiṣadā,
and Suviśālā;

29 Pratiṣṭhā, Supratiṣṭhā,
Rocamānā,
Surocanā, Naukarṇī,
Mukhakarṇī,
Viśirā,
and Manthiṇī;

30 Ekacandra, Meghakarṇā,
Meghamālā,
Virocanā.
O bull-brave Bharata!
These and many other
mother-goddesses,

31 Thousands of them,
in numerous forms,
served Kārtikeya-Skanda.
O Bharata descendant!
Long-nailed, long-limbed,
long-toothed,

32 They are young and strong
and attractive
and exquisitely ornamented.
Great is their glory,
and they change shape
at will.

33 O bull-brave Bharata!
Some are fleshless,
some fair-complexioned,
some golden-limbed,
some like dark clouds,
some the colour of smoke,

34 Some pink like the dawn.
The mother-goddesses
are all pleasure-fulfilled.
Long tresses bunned high,
white-robed, brown-eyed,
wide waist-bands ...

35

Some had long stomachs,
long ears,
and long breasts, eyes
like burnished copper.
The eyes of some
were green.

36

boon-granters they, travelling-at-
will they, pleasure-lovers they.
Mahā-powerful they –
with Yama's strength,
and Rudra-Śiva's, and Soma's
and Kubera's,

37

O foe-chastising Janamejaya,
and Mahendra-Indra's
and Varuṇa's too, and Agni's
and Kumāra-Skanda's
and Brahma's also, and Vāyu's,
O bull-brave Bharata,

38

And Viṣṇu's and Sūrya's,
and Varāha's also –
these mahā-powerful apsarā-
lovely mother-goddesses,
mind-enchanters
and heart-stealers.

39

Sweet-voiced like the kokila, some;
rolling in wealth
like Dhanada-Kubera, some;
valiant like Śakra-Indra, some;
resplendent
like Vahini-Agni, some.

40

Always fierce on the field
cf battle
to their enemies;
changing form
as and when they please,
and swift as the wind.

41 Unimaginable their strength
and their valour
and their wondrous exploits.
They inhabit trees
and open spaces
and four-road crossing;

42 Also caves, cremation grounds,
mountains, and springs.
They are variously dressed,
variously ornamented;
they were all kinds
of garlands.

43 They love variegated robes,
they speak
a variety of languages
They, along with
many other terrorisers
of enemies,

44 With the permission of Indra,
lord of heaven,
dedicated themselves to serve
mahātmā Skanda.
So, the śakti-missile, by Bhagavān
Pākaśāna-Indra,

45 Was given to Guha-Skanda,
O tiger-among-rājās,
to destroy the enemies of the gods,
along with
a self-resplendent mahā-loud
mahā-bell.

46 O bull-brave Bharata!
Paśupati-Śiva
also gave a flag as lustrous
as the morning sun,
and his mahā-army
of *bhūta*-warriors.

47 Known as the Dhanañjaya,
the invincible fierce
warriors of that army
were renowned
for their tapasyā and valour,
and were experts

48 In all weapons and missiles.
They numbered thirty thousand,
each as powerful
as Rudra-Śiva,
and never known to retreat
on the battlefield.

49 Viṣṇu gave away
his garland known
as the Vaijayantī,
and Umā gave
two dazzling
sun-bright dresses.

50 Gaṅgā gave him
a celestial water-pot
produced from amṛta.
And Bṛhaspati
lovingly gave Kumāra-Skanda
a rod.

51 Garuḍa gave him
his dearly-loved, colourful son –
the peacock.
Aruṇa gave him
his crimson-crested,
talon-weaponed cock.

52 Rājā Varuṇa gave a powerful
and valiant Nāga;
and to the welwisher-
of-Brahmins Skanda,
a black deerskin was given
by Brahmā,

53 The creator of the universe,
along with never-
failing victory in battle.
Installed as
their general by the hosts
of gods, Skanda

54 Dazzled with glory like
a second Pāvaka-Agni.
Ringed
by the congregation
of his followers
and mother-goddesses,

55 Skanda made preparations
to destroy the Daityas,
to the great delight
of the bull-brave gods.
That Nairṛta army,
with bells ringing,

56 *Bheri*-drums and conches and
cymbals blaring
in unison, flags fluttering,
all-weapons-equipped,
glowed with the glory of
a star-studded autumn sky.

57 So that army of gods
and hosts of *bhūtas*
began to march confidently,
to the accompaniment
of the music of bheri-drums
and conches,

58 *Paṭaha*-tabors,
jhāṅjha soft-kettledrums,
krakaca-instruments,
goviṣa and gomukha horns,
āḍambara and dindima drums –
a deafening mahā-cacophony!

59 *Vāsava*-Indra and the gods
chanted praises
in honour of Kumāra-
Skanda. The gods
and gandharvas sang,
and the apsarās danced.

60 So pleased was Mahāsena-
Skanda with this
that he granted a boon
to the gods that
he would destroy anyone
with tried to harm them.

61 Delighted by this assurance
of the finest
of the gods Kumāra-Skanda,
the gods assumed
in advance the deaths
of their enemies.

62 Indeed, the noisy joy
of the celebration
of the hosts of bhutas
of mahātmā Skanda's
boon reverberated through
the three worlds.

63 So Mahāsena-Skanda advanced
at the head
of his mahā-army
to exterminate
the Daitya antigods
and protect the gods.

64 O lord of men!
Leading the warriors
of Mahāsena-Skanda were
Determination, Victory,
Dharma, Success, Prosperity,
Tortitude and Smṛti-Scriptures.

65 A fearsome army!
The warriors
of celestial Skanda,
equipped with *śūla*-spears,
mudgara-mallets,
flaming wood-weapons,

66 Maces, clubs, *nārāca*-arrows,
śakti-lances,
tomara-javelins, marched,
led by Guha-Skanda,
who roared
his deafening leonine war-cries.

67 Seeing him,
the Dānava and Daitya antigods,
and the rākṣasas panicked,
and scattered helter-skelter
in fear
in different directions.

68 The variously weaponed gods
gave them chase.
Seeing the enemy soldiers
scattering,
powerful and energetic Skanda,
blazing with anger, –

69 Bhagavān Skanda repeatedly hurled
his *śakti*-spear at them.
The passion of his anger
blazed
like the furious flames
of a ghee-fed sacred fire.

70 Mahārāja! The repeated use
of his *śakti*
by the illimitably energetic Skanda
made
flaming meteors streak
towards the earth.

71 O king!
And thunderbolts fell also
on the earth,
with fearful noises
like thunderbolts falling
at the dissolution of the universe.

72 O bull-brave Bharata!
From a single *śakti*-missile
hurled
by Agni's son,
a crore of *śaktis*
scattered all around.

73 With this awesome use
of destructive might,
Bhagavān Mahāsena-Skanda
exterminated
the Indra-among-Daityas
Tāraka,

74 Who was protected, O king,
by one hundred thousand
valiant Daityas.
Next he killed Mahiṣa
who was protected by eight *padmas* –
eight thousand million;

75 And then Tripāda,
protected by a thousand *ayutas* –
ten lakhs of antigods;
then Hṛdodara,
protected by ten *nikharvas* –
ten billion warriors,

76 Armed with all varieties
of weapons and missiles.
As he continued
this slaughter-of enemies,
a tremendous clamour
was raised,

77 O rājā, by the followers
of Kumāra-Skanda,
filling the ten directions,
as they danced,
and jumped,
and screamed with joy.

78 O Indra-among-rājās!
The flames
of the *śakti*-missile
enveloped the three worlds
like a massive
ever-widening yawn.

79 Some Daityas perished
in the flames,
thousands collapsed when they heard
the roars of Skanda,
and many enemies of the gods died,
whipped by war-flags.

80 Some slumped on the earth,
deafened by the noise
of his bells;
others were shredded
by his weapons,
and fell on the field.

81 This was how
the mahā-powerful hero
Kārtikeya-Skanda
systematically massacred
the god-terrorising hosts
of antigods.

82 From the vantage
of the Krauñca mountain,
the mahā-powerful son of Bali,
Bāna,
harassed the army
of the gods.

83 Foresight-gifted Mahāsena-Skanda
attacked
that enemy of the gods,
who immediately
sought to hide
in the Krauñca mountain.

84 This so roused the mahā-anger
of Kārtikeya-Skanda
that the *bhagavān* general
fired the *śakti*-missile
and shattered the *krauñca*-bird-
song-echoing mountain.

85 Monkeys and other tree-dwellers
scattered in panic
in that *śāla*-forested mountain.
So did elephants,
and flocks of birds
and Pannaga-serpents.

86 Black *golāṅgūla*-apes
and bears shrieked
and growled in fear,
terrified deer scampered away,
and the mountain
resounded with cries of pain.

87 *Śarabha*-beasts and lions
emerged from their caves
and fled.
A sorrowful spectacle –
yet the mountain looked
spectacularly beautiful.

88 And bands of Vidyādharas
and Kinnaras
inhabiting that mountain,
terrified by the impact
of Skanda's *śakti*-missile,
flew off into the sky.

89 From that blazing mountain
emerged hundreds
and thousands
of beautifully ornamented
and splendidly garlanded
Daitya antigods.

90 The followers of Kumāra-Skanda
confronted them
and killed them all.
And Bhagavān Skanda,
confronting the Indra-among Daityas
Bali's son

91 And his younger brother,
killed them both,
as the lord of the gods Indra
once killed Vṛtra.
Slayer-of-foes Agni's son shattered Krauñca
with his śakti.

92 That mahā-powerful general
appeared sometimes as himself,
and sometimes
in many other forms.
Released by him repeatedly in battle,
that *śakti*

93 Returned each time to the hand
of Bhagavān Pāvaki-Skanda,
redoubling
his valour and energy
and fame and splendour
each time.

94 Thousands of Daityas perished
with the sundering
of Krauñca mountain.
Having completed
his mission of massacre,
Bhagavān Skanda-deva

95 Joyfully received praise
and respect
from the assembly of gods.
O Bharata descendant! O rājā!
Conches blared,
and *dundubhi*-drums sounded,

96 And thousands of devī-goddesses,
hundreds of thousands,
showered
fragrant flowers
on the head
of the lord-of-yogīs Skanda.

97 Soft breezes blew,
wafting the scents
of celestial flowers.
Gandharvas
and proficient-in-yajñas mahā-ṛṣis
sang Skanda's praises.

98 Some extolled him
as the son
of Pitāmaha-Brahmā,
Sanat Kumāra himself,
the eldest of all
the Brahma-yoni progeny.

99 Others insisted he was the son
of Maheśvara-Śiva,
still others of Vibhāvasu-Agni,
others of Umā-Pārvatī,
others of the Kṛttikā mothers,
others of Gaṅgā.

100 The mahā-powerful lord of yogīs,
Skanda,
appeared to some as one,
to others as two,
or as four, or as a hundred,
or even a thousand forms.

101 O rājā! I have expatiated
on the installation
of Kārtikeya-Skanda.
Listen now
to the sanctity of the *tīrthas*
of the Sarasvatī.

102 Mahārāja! After the rout
of the enemies of the gods
by Kumāra-Skanda,
those excellent *tīrthas*
became, as it were,
a second heaven.

103 There Pāvaka-Agni's son Skanda
apportioned
appropriate glory and power
to the gods,
and to his Nairṛta warriors
authority over the three worlds.

104 Mahārāja! This was the way
the installation
of Daitya-destroying
Bhagavān Skanda
took place at that *tīrtha*
as the general of the gods.

105 O bull-brave Bharata!
There is another *tīrtha*
known as the Taijasa,
where the hosts of gods
performed the *abhiṣeka*-installation
of Varuṇa.

106 Balarāma bathed in that *tīrtha*,
and worshipped Skanda,
after which
he distributed gold
and robes and other gifts
to Brahmins.

107 Slayer-of-hostile-heroes
Mādhava-Balarāma
passed the night there,
offered his pūjā,
and took his sacred bath;
after which,

108 The finest of the Mādhavas,
Balarāma
felt spiritually exalted.
O rājā!
Whatever you asked me,
I have explained.
I have given in detail
an account
of Bhagavān Skanda's
abhiṣeka-installation
as the general
of the army of the gods,
and the childhood
of that mahā-powerful hero.

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 "Utterly wonderful, O Brahmin,"
said Janamejaya,
"is your detailed account
of Kumāra-Skanda's abhiṣeka-installation.

2 O tapasyā-rich one!
My ātman has been purified,
I horripilate with delight,
my heart is overjoyed.

3 So filled with happiness am I
with the story
of Kumāra-Skanda's *abhiṣeka*
and his destruction of the Daityas
that I long to hear
even more.

4 O mahā-wise one!
O excellent speaker!
Tell me about
the *abhiṣeka*-installation
of lord-of-waters Varuṇa
in the distant past."

5 Listen, O rājā
(Vaiśampāyana said),
of how, in the distant past,
in a previous *kalpa*,
in the Kṛta-yuga,
this took place.

6 All the gods went to Varuṇa
and said to him:
"Like the rājā-of-the-gods
Śakra-Indra
who protects us
from fear and danger,

7 You also should become
the lord
of all rivers and streams.
You will dwell
forever
in the *makara*-populated ocean,

8 And the lord-of-rivers ocean
will be
under your control.
You will wax and wane
with the waxing and waning
of Soma the Moon."

9 Varuna listened to the gods
and replied:
"*Evam-astu*: So be it."
The gods
in a body
made ocean-dwelling Varuṇa

10 The lord of the watery world,
following the ritual
as prescribed by tradition.
After the installation of Varuṇa
as the lord,
the gods

11 Returned to their abode,
having offered pūjā-respect
to the lord-of-waters.
After his *abhiṣeka*
by the gods,
mahā-illustrious Varuṇa,

12 Like Śatakratu-Indra
who protected the gods,
became the protector
of oceans, rivers,
lakes and streams,
as enjoined by tradition.

13 Destroyer of the antigod Pralamba,
mahā-wise Balarāma
bathed in that *tīrtha*
and distributed lavish gifts,
after which
he came to Agni-*tīrtha.*

14 O defectless one!
When Hutāśana-Agni,
the god of fire,
hid in the womb of *śamī*-wood,
when the light of the worlds
disappeared, then

15 The gods approached the Grandfather-
of-all-the-worlds
Sarva-loka-Pitāmaha Brahmā
and said, "*Bhagavān*!
Agni has disappeared.
We do not know why.

16 Lord! Make fire reappear,
or all creatures of the world
will perish."
Janamejaya asked:
"How did world-respected Bhagavān Agni
disappear?

17 And how was he discovered
by the gods?
Tell me everything."
It was Bhṛgu's curse
(said Vaiśampāyana)
that made fearful Jātaveda-Agni,

18 Bhagavān Agni,
hide inside the womb
of *śamī*-wood.
Disturbed by the disappearance of Agni,
Vāsava-Indra
and the gods,

19 In extreme distress,
began to search for him.
They came
to Agni-*tīrtha*,
and there, in the womb
of *śamī*-wood,

20 The gods saw Agni reposing,
as was natural,
inside that sacrificial wood.
O tiger-among-men!
All the gods,
headed by Bṛhaspati,

21 Accompanied by Vāsava-Indra,
were delighted
that Jvalana-Agni
was finally found,
and went back.
Agni became all-consuming,

22 O mahā-fortune-favoured Janamejaya,
as a result
of Bhṛgu's curse,
as predicted by that Brahamā-knower.
After bathing in this *tīrtha*,
the Brahmā-yoni *tīrtha*

23 Was visited by Balarāma,
where Lord-of-the-worlds
Pitāmaha Brahmā created the universe.
In the past,
after bathing here with the gods,
Prabhu Lord Brahma

24 Created *tīrthas* for the gods,
as ordained by tradition.
Bathing
in that *tīrtha*,
and distributing a variety
of lavish gifts,

25 Balarāma proceeded
to Kubera-*tīrtha*,
where, after mahā-tapasyā,
O rājā,
Ilavila's son Kubera
became the lord of all riches.

26 O rājā! That is where
he effortlessly acquired
all possible wealth and affluence.
O finest of men!
Balarāma,
at this *tīrtha*,

27 Bathed, and distributed
a variety of riches
to Brahmins.
There, he saw a place
situated in the enchanting forest
of Kubera,

28 Where in the distant past
the yakṣa-rājā
mahātmā Kubera,
after profound tapasyā,
succeeded in obtaining
many boons.

29 Lordship over wealth,
loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friendship
with limitlessly energetic Rudra-Śiva,
divine status,
protection of the worlds,
his son Nalakūbara –

30 All these, O mahā-muscled one,
were obtained
by lord-of-riches Kubera.
There the Marut wind-gods
performed
his *abhiṣeka*-installation,

31 And gave him a mind-swift vehicle
pulled
by *haṁsa*-swans,
known as the celestial Puṣpaka.
There also he became
lord of the Nairṛatas.

32 O rājā! After bathing
in that *tīrtha*,
and distributing
much riches
fragrant-with-unguents
Balarāma

33 Proceeded to the *tīrtha*
called the Badarapācana,
filled with animals,
with lush vegetation,
with fruits and flowers
of every season.

SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 I said earlier (continued Vaiśampāyana)
how Balarāma went to Badarapācana,
frequented by tapasyā-practisers and Siddhas,
and by the strict-vowed daughter

2 Of Bharadvāja,
in the distant past –
a girl named Śrutāvatī,
of incomparable beauty,
a radiant
brahmacāriṇī kumārī.

3 That lovely lady
practised a tapasyā
of intense discipline,
dedicated to one aim:
to take as husband
the rājā-of-the-gods Indra.

4 O enhancer of the glory
of the Kauravas!
She spent many years
practising forms of tapasyā
exceptionally difficult
for women to practise.

5 O lord of the world!
Chastiser-of-Pāka
Bhagavān Pākaśāsana-Indra
was pleased
by the quality of her penance
and her supreme bhakti.

6 In the disguise
of Brahma-ṛṣi Vāsiṣṭha,
a mahātmā sage,
the Prabhu-Lord
of the dwellers of heaven
came to visit her.

7 O descendant of Bharata!
Seeing him approaching,
she offered Vāsiṣṭha
the pūjā-respect
appropriate
to the finest of tapasyā-practising munis.

8 The graceful and gracious,
sweet-speaking,
rule-respecting girl said:
"Revered one! *Bhagavan*!
Prabhu! Lord! O tiger-among-munis!
Command me.

9 O you whose vows are true!
Whatever I can give you,
I will give –
but not my hand in marriage,
because all my bhakti
is for Śakra-Indra.

10 O you whose wealth is tapasyā!
My vows, my tapasyā,
my respect for rules
are exclusively to please
the lord of the three worlds,
Tribhuvaneśvara Śakra-Indra."

11 O descendant of Bharata!
Bhagavān Deva-Indra
heard her, smiled,
glanced askance at her and,
appreciating her dedication to rules,
said consolingly:

12 "Devoted-to-truth lady!
Well am I aware
of the intensity of your tapasyā.
O graceful and gracious girl,
your heart's desire
and the goal of your tapasyā

13 Will be fulfilled
in every way,
O lovely-faced lady.
Everything is attained
by the practice
of tapasyā.

14 O auspicious-faced beauty!
The realms of the gods
are attained by tapasyā.
The root cause
of mahā-happiness
is tapasyā.

15 O graceful and gracious girl!
Knowing this,
men practise severe tapasyā,
forsake their bodies,
and attain god-hood.
Listen to me carefully.

16 Auspicious-vowed lady!
Fortunate lady!
Take these five jujube berries.
Cook them."
Saying this,
slayer-of-Bala Bhagavān Indra

17 Asked the gracious girl
the way to an āshram
near a *tīrtha*
not too far away,
and there he began
practising *japa*-meditation.

18 O bestower of honours!
That place is celebrated
in the three worlds
as the Indra-*tīrtha*.
Bhagavān Pākaśāsana-Indra
was testing the girl

19 By making it impossible
for her
to boil the jujube-berries.
O rājā!
Tirelessly,
and without the least complaint,

20 The pure-minded lady
lit a fire.
O tiger-among-rājās!
That mahā-vowed girl
quickly began cooking
the berries.

21 O bull-brave mortal!
However mahā-hard she tried,
the berries
simply would not cook.
And before she knew it,
the day had ended.

22 And all the firewood
had by this time
been used up.
Seeing the fire dying out,
she decided to use
her body as fuel.

23 O defectless one!
That lovely-to-look-at lady
first placed her feet
in the fire,
and as they burnt
she pushed them further in.

24 That faultless girl
was not troubled
by her burning feet.
Her fearful task
was done solely
to please the mahā-ṛṣi.

25 No trace of suffering
shadowed her mind
or showed on her face.
She placed her feet
in the fire
as if in water.

26 Only one thought passed
through her mind,
O descendant of Bharata:
"How will I ever
be able to cook
these jujube-berries?"

27 O Bharata descendant!
Remembering the words
of the mahā-ṛṣi,
the auspicious girl
kept cooking the berries,
but they would not cook.

28 Bhagavān Agni himself
consumed her feet,
yet there was never
the slightest trace of pain
in her mind
as he did so.

29 Seeing this remarkable feat,
Lord-of-the-three-worlds
Tribhuvaneśvara-Indra
was delighted,
and appeared before the girl
in his true form.

30 The finest of the gods said
to the strict-vowed girl:
"You have pleased me,
auspicious girl,
with your bhakti, tapasyā,
and observance of rules.

31 Your desire, auspicious girl,
will be granted.
O mahā-fortune-favoured lady!
You will forsake your body,
and live with me
in heaven.

32 O lovely-eyebrowed one!
This *tīrtha*
will be known in the world
as Badarapācana
or 'Where the Jujube-Berries
were cooked.'

33 The three worlds will praise it.
Many Brahmā-ṛṣis
have bathed in its waters.
Auspicious girl! O faultless one!
O mahā-fortune-favoured one!
In this best of *tīrthas*,

34 In the distant past,
the seven ṛṣis abandoned Arundhatī,
and journeyed,
to the Himālayas.
Those mahā-fortune-favoured,
strictly disciplined ṛṣis

35 Went there to collect
fruits and roots
for their sustenance.
And while they were doing so
in the forests
of the Himālayas,

36 Not a drop of rain
fell on the land
for all of twelve years.
Those tapasyā-practisers
built an āshram
and lived there.

37 Gracious and graceful Arundhatī
continued
with her practice of tapasyā.
Seeing Arundhatī
absorbed so deeply
in observance of rules,

38 Three-eyed, boon-granting
Śiva
was profoundly pleased.
Disguised
as a Brahmin,
mahā-illustrious Mahādeva-Śiva

39 Went to Arundhati
and said,
'Alms, O auspicious one!'
Lovely-to-look-at Arundhatī
said
to the Brahmin:

40 'I have no food left.
O Brahmin!
Eat these jujube-berries.'
Mahādeva-Śiva said to her:
'Cook them,
strict-vowed lady.'

41 Abiding by his word,
to please the Brahmin,
illustrious Arundhatī
placed the jujube-berries
on the fire,
and tried to cook them.

42 And as she cooked,
sacred stories and enchanting *kāthas*
reached her ears.
She went on cooking.
The fierce twelve-year drought
ended.

43 She kept listening
to the auspicious stories,
and she kept cooking
without ever eating,
and the twelve-year drought ended,
as if in a day.

44 The seven ṛṣis returned
from the Himālayas
with an assortment of fruits.
Bhagavān Śiva
then said
to Arundhatī:

45 'Wise-in-dharma lady!
Return to the ṛṣis.
Be with them,
as you were before.
Wise-in-dharma lady!
Your tapasyā has pleased me.'

46 With these words,
Bhagavān Hara-Śiva
revealed his true form,
and spoke to the ṛṣis
about the exemplary conduct
of Arundhatī:

47 'Brahmins, in my opinion,
the tapasyā you practised
on the Himālayas
cannot be compared
with the tapasyā practised
by Arundhatī here.

48 This lady of tapasyā practised
the severest tapasyā
for twelve years,
without ever eating,
devoting all her time
to cooking berries.'

49 Bhagavān Śiva turned
to Arundhatī and said:
'Gracious and graceful girl!
Look in your heart,
and ask
for anything you like.'

50 In the presence of the seven ṛṣis,
pink-dawn-eyed,
large-eyed Arundhatī said:
'If you are pleased with me,
Bhagavān,
make this encharting *tīrtha*

51 Known as the Badarapācana,
and make it loved
by gods and deva-ṛṣis.
O God above all gods!
May anyone who stays three nights here
with a pure mind

52 Obtain all the merits
that accrue
from observing a twelve-year fast.'
'So be it!'
said Deva Śiva
to the lady-of-tapasyā.

53 Praised by the seven ṛṣis,
Deva Śiva
returned to his realm.
The ṛṣis
were astounded by the fact
that Arundhatī,

54 Despite her ordeal
of neither eating nor drinking,
showed no signs of fatigue or debility.
And so,
pure-hearted Arundhatī attained
the supreme perfection –

55 Exactly as you,
O strict-vowed mahā-fortune-favoured lady,
have attained perfection
by your vow
of total surrender to me,
O noble one.

56 Auspicious lady! *Kalyāṇī*!
So profoundly
have you pleased me
that I will grant you a boon
than which
there is no greater boon.

57 Auspicious lady! *Kalyāṇī*!
The boon
that mahātmā Śiva gave Arundhatī –
a boon
far greater in power
and influence

58 Will I grant you
because of the vow
that you have kept.
Anyone who passes
a single night here
with complete mental concentration,

59 And bathes here, leaving his body
will attain the realm
very difficult for others to attain."
Ilustrious Bhagavān Deva
thousand-eyed Sahasrākṣa-Indra
said this

60 To Śrutāvatī,
lady of piety,
and returned to his heaven.
With the departure
of thunderbolt-wielding Indra,
rain fell,

61 Along with divinely scented
auspicious flowers,
O finest of the Bharatas,
and there was heard
the mahā-cacophony
of *dundubhi*-drums.

62 O lord of the world!
Auspicious flower-scented breezes
began blowing.
Blessed Srutāvatī
gave up her body
and became the wife of Indra.

63 O never-failing Janamejaya!
She enjoyed Indra
by the strength of her tapasyā.
Janamejaya asked:
"Bhagavan! Who was lovely Śrutāvatī's mother?
Who brought her up?

64 O Brahmin!
Satisfy my curiosity.
Tell me everything."
Vaiśampāyana replied:
The Brahma-ṛṣi mahātmā
Bharadvāja's semen spirted

65 When he happened to see
the large-eyed apsarā Ghṛtācī.
The *japa*-meditating
excellent ṛṣi
received it
in his palm,

66 From where it spilled
into a leaf-cup,
where the girl was born.
Her birth-rituals
were performed
by the rich-in-tapasyā,

67 By the mahā-muni
Bharadvāja who also
in the presence of all
the deva-ṛṣis named
her Śrutāvatī.
Giving her shelter
in his āshram, dharmātmā
Bharadvāja went
to the Himālayan forests.

68 The finest of all
the Vṛṣṇi heroes,
mahā-dignified Balarāma
bathed in that *tīrtha*,
and gave wealth lavishly
to the mahā-twice-born;
then, with dedicated ātman,
he proceeded to the *tīrtha*
of Śakra-Indra.

SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 At the Indra-*tīrtha*
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the powerful hero of the Yādavas
bathed,
and distributed wealth and gems
to Brahmins.

2 Rājā-of-the-gods Indra
performed a hundred rituals
at that *tīrtha*,
and the lord of the gods
gave lavish wealth
to Bṛhaspati.

3 With the help of Brahmins
learned in the Vedas,
Indra performed the sacrifices
as ordained
in the scriptures,
with generous *dakṣiṇās*.

4 O finest of the Bharatas!
Because mahā-radiant Indra performed
a hundred sacrifices there,
he is known as Śatakratu,
the Hundred-Sacrificer.

5 That is also the reason
this auspicious,
sacred, merit-bestowing,
all-crime-cancelling
eternal *tīrtha*
is known as Indra-*tīrtha*.

6 Mace-wielding Balarama took
his sacred bath
in this *tīrtha*,
pūjā-respected the Brahmins,
and gave away wealth
and delicious food,

7 After which he proceeded
to the excellently sacred
Rāma-*tīrtha*.
The mahā-fortune-favoured
Bhārgava Paraśurāma
of supreme mahā-tapasyā,

8 After slaughtering
all the bull-brave Kṣatriyas
and conquering the earth,
and honouring
the finest-of-munis Kaśyapa
as his preceptor,

9 Performed the Vājapeya
and a hundred horse-sacririfices
here,
and gave away
the entire sea-girdled earth
as *dakṣiṇā*.

10 Distributing as gifts
all kinds of gems,
cows, elephants, slave girls,
sheep and goats,
Paraśurāma retired
to the forests.

11 After revering
that supremely sacred *tirtha*
frequented by gods and Brahmā-ṛṣis,
and honouring the munis,
Balarāma went
to the Yamunā-*tirtha*,

12 Where, O lord of the earth,
Aditi's
mahā-fortune-favoured son,
fair-complexioned Varuṇa,
once performed
the Rājasūya sacrifice.

13 Slayer-of-hostile-heroes Varuṇa
performed
that sacrifice
after he defeated
human beings and gods
in a great battle.

14 After the completion
of that excellent sacrifice,
a battle that terrified
the three worlds
took place between the gods
and the Dānava antigods.

15 O Janamejaya!
After the completion
of the finest-of-sacrifices,
the Rājasūya,
fearfully fierce battles afflicted
the Kṣatriya race.

16 Fulfiller-of-everyone's-desires
radiant Balarāma
bathed in that *tīrtha*,
pūjā-respected the ṛṣis,
and gave gifts
to all who asked.

17 Happily listening
to his praises
by the mahā-ṛṣis,
wild-flower-garlanded
and lotus-eyed Balarāma
went to Āditya-*tīrtha.*

18 O finest of rājās!
After performing
a sacrifice there,
Bhāskara the Sun obtained
his resplendence
and lordship of all luminous bodies.

19 On the bank of that river,
Vāsava-Indra and the gods,
the Viṣvadevas,
the Maruts,
the gandharvas,
the apsarās,

20 Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,
Śuka, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
rākṣasas
and Piśācas –
all of them,
O lord of the world,

21 And many others too,
thousands of them,
attained the fulfilment
of yoga-*siddhi.*
O foe-chastiser!
On Sarasvatī's auspicious, sacred *tīrtha*,

22 Viṣṇu in the distant past,
O best of the Bharatas,
killed the anti-gods
Madhu and Kaitabha,
after which he bathed
in that excellent *tīrtha.*

23 O descendant of Bharata!
Island-born
mahātmā Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
also bathed in this *tīrtha*,
and attained
the supreme yoga-siddhi.

24 And Asita Devala too,
a ṛṣi of mhā-tapasyā,
at this *tīrtha*,
with supreme yoga-concentration,
obtained
yoga-fulfilment.

SECTION FIFTY

1 In the distant past (continued Vaiśampāyana),
at this *tīrtha*
lived rich-in-tapasyā dharmātma Asita Devala,
following a householder's dharma.

2 Stable-in-dharma, pure, self-disciplined,
never judging others, observing mahā-tapasyā,
his thoughts, words and deeds
were serene towards all creatures.

3 Mahārāja! Never angry,
keeping calm in praise or blame,
pleasant or unpleasant,
he was indeed
like Yama the god of death,
seeing all equally.

4 To that mahā-tapasyā ṛṣi,
gold and mud were the same.
Every day
he offered pūjā-respect
to gods, Brahmins,
and guests.

5 With dharma as his ideal,
he practised brahmacarya,
delighting in it.
O mahā-fortune-favoured one!
It so happened
that a yoga-dedicated mendicant

6 Muni, a percipient ascetic,
named Jaigīṣavya,
came to that *tīrtha.*
O rājā! That mahā-radiant muni
passed his days
in Devala's ashram;

7 Absorbed in yoga, mahārāja,
that mahā-tapasyā
muni had attained fulfilment.
Though mahā-muni Jaigīṣavya
stayed
in his āshram,

8 Devala, abiding by dharma,
practised his own yoga
without ever disturbing him.
In this way,
mahārāja,
a long time passed.

9 And so it was, Janamejaya,
that finest-of-munis Devala
did not see Jaigīṣavya,
for long periods of time;
only at meal times,
noble-minded

10 And wise-in-dharma Jaigīṣavya
would see Devala –
and during acceptance of alms.
Seeing mahā-muni Jaigīṣavya
in his role
as a mendicant,

11 O descendant of Bharata,
Devala was pleased,
and honoured him,
offering him pūjā-respect
to the best
of his ability.

12 This state of affairs
continued for many years,
and then,
O king, one day,
in the mind
of mahātmā Devala

13 Was born a deep anxiety
when he saw
the mahā-radiant muni:
"So many years
have I spent
offering pūjā-respect

14 To this mendicant –
and he has never spoken
a single word to me.
He is lazy and indifferent."
With these thoughts,
he went to the ocean,

15 Water-pot in hand;
Śrīmān Devala took
the sky path to the ocean.
Dharmātmā Devala arrived
at the lord-of-rivers, and,
O descendant of Bharata,

16 He found Jaigīṣavya
already there,
ahead of him.
Limitlessly radiant Devala
was taken by surprise,
and he thought:

17 *How is it possible*
for this mendicant
to come ahead of me,
and finish his bath
in the ocean
before I do so?

18 Mahā-ṛṣi Devala bathed
in the ocean,
and completing his chants
and *japa*-meditation,
Śrīmān Devala
returned to his āshram,

19 Carrying his *kalaṣa*-waterpot
filled with water.
As soon as he entered
the āshram,
O Janamejaya,
the muni

20 Noticed Jaigīṣavya
sitting there
ahead of him.
Not one word
did Jaigīṣavya
speak to him.

21 That mahā-tapasyā muni
kept sitting there
like a block of wood.
Seeing that
ocean-bathed
ocean-profound muni

22 Sitting in the āshram
ahead of his arrival,
intelligent Asita Devala,
O rājā,
gave the matter
serious thought.

23 O Indra-among-rājās!
Finest-of-munis Devala
was impressed
by the yogic power
of Jaigīṣavya's tapasyā,
and he thought:

24 "One moment in the ocean,
the next instant
in the āshram – how?"
Puzzled and pensive,
master-of-mantras
muni Devala

25 Soared into the sky;
Devala's aim,
O lord of the world,
was to test
the mendicant muni
Jaigīṣavya.

26 Up in the sky,
he saw the perfected ones, the Siddhas,
in deep meditation –
and he saw Jaigīṣavya
up there too,
pūjā-respected by the Siddhas.

27 Strict-vow-dedicated Asita Devala
was filled
with anger.
Next, Asita Devala saw
Jaigīṣavya
proceeding towards heaven.

28 From the realm of heaven
he saw him go
to the realm of the *pitṛs*,
from the realm of the *pitṛs*
he proceeded
to the realm of Yama.

29 From there Jaigīṣavya soared
even higher;
and the mahā-muni
was seen proceeding
to the water-world
of Soma the moon.

30 From there he went
to the realm of those
who practise one-pointed meditation;
and next,
he proceeded to the realm
of the Agnihotṛ sacrifice.

31 Soaring even higher,
he proceeded to the realm
of the tapasyā-rich performers
of Darṣa and Paurṇamāsa yajñas;
then, to those
who sacrifice animals.

32 Then he was seen proceeding
to the serene realm
of the mahā-tapasyā ascetics
who perform the Cāturmāsa yajña,
where he received pujā-respect
from the gods.

33 Then, in the realm
of the performers
of the Agniṣṭoma,
and in the realm
of the tapasyā-rich performers
of the Agniṣṭut –

34 Was Jaigīṣavya seen
by Asita Devala.
In the realm of those
who offer gold-*dakṣiṇā*
at the most excelling
Vājapeya yajña –

35 In the realm
of those mahā-wise ones
was Jaigīṣavya also seen.
In the realms
of the performers
of the Rājasūya and Puṇḍarīka –

36 There too was Jaigīṣavya
seen
by Asita Devala.
The two finest-of-yajñas –
the Aśvamedha horse-sacrifice
and Naramedha human-sacrifice –

37 Performed by the finest of men –
Jaigīṣavya was seen
in their realms.
The performers
of the difficult Sarva-medha
and the Sautra-maṇi –

38 In their realms too
was Jaigīṣavya seen
by Asita Devala.
And those who perform
the various kinds
of twelve-year *satra*-sacrifices –

39 In their realms too
was Jaigīṣavya seen
by Asita Devala.
In the realms
of Mitra and Varuṇa
and Āditya

40 Was Jaigīṣavya seen
by Asita Devala.
And the realms
of Rudra
and the Vasus
and Bṛhaspati –

41 Asita Devala saw
Jaigīṣavya soar
even beyond them.
Going beyond the realm of the cows,
into the realm
of Brahma-*sattra* –

42 Was Jaigīṣavya seen
by Asita Devala.
Going even beyond
the three realms
by the power of his radiance,
the Brahmin

43 Was seen by Asita Devala
entering the realm
of the *pativrata* husband-devoted wives.
Then, suddenly,
finest-of-munis Jaigīṣavya
was nowhere!

44 O foe-crushing Janamejaya!
He was out of sight!
He had disappeared!
Mahā-fortune-favoured Devala
began wondering
about Jaigīṣavya –

45 His power, his strict vows,
the incomparable perfection
of his yoga.
Asita Devala asked
the Siddhas
and saintly dwellers of those realms,

46 Patiently folding his palms in añjali
before the performers
of Brahma-sattra:
"I do not see
Jaigīṣavya of mahā-energy
anywhere.

47 Where is he?
Tell me!
I am bursting with curiosity."
The Siddhas replied:
"Strict-vowed Devala, listen.
What has happened is this:

48 Jaigīṣavya has attained
the realm
of the eternal Brahman."
When he heard these words
of the Brahma-*sattra* Siddhas
(Vaiśampāyana continued),

49 Asita Devala in a flash
soared up,
and as suddenly plummeted down.
The Siddhas
said again
to Devala:

50 "O Brahmin!
You who are rich in tapasyā!
You cannot go
to the Brahman-realm
where Jaigīṣavya
has gone."

51 Having listened to the Siddhas
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Asita Devala returned
to this world,
passing successively
through the different realms.

52 Soaring down like a bird,
Devala returned
to his sacred āshram.
Right there, sitting,
in front of his eyes,
was Jaigīṣavya.

53 With his discriminating mind,
guided by dharma,
Asita Devala reflected
on the power of yoga
that inspired the tapasyā
of Jaigīṣavya.

54 O rājā! Mahā-muni
mahātmā Jaigīṣavya –
Devala approached him
very humbly,
and said
to him:

55 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!
I want to shelter
in mokṣa-dharma."
Jaigīṣavya listened
to him,
and instructed him;

56 Because he was eager
to experience *saṁnyāsa*,
Jaigīṣavya of mahā-tapasyā
explained to him yoga,
and what the śāstras define
as good deed and ill-deed,

57 Together with the practical details
as ordained
by precept and tradition.
Because Devala was eager
to experience *saṁnyāsa*,
the *bhūtas* and *pitṛs*

58 Wept and complained:
"Who will now give us
our food-offerings?"
Devala heard
the piteous wails
of the *bhūtas*

59 Echoing in all
the ten directions,
and thought of abandoning
the idea of mokṣa.
O descendant of Bharata!
Fruits, roots, kuśa-grass,

60 Flowers and medicinal herbs –
thousands of them –
started weeping:
"Wicked-minded and mean
Devala
is going to harm us!

61 He is going back
on his word
never to harm any creature!"
So the finest-of-munis Devala
began to re-think
his decision,

62 Asking himself:
Which is better –
saṁnyāsa or the householder's dharma?
O finest-of-rājās!
Devala thought
about it deeply,

63 And concluded that for him
mokṣa-dharma
was preferable
to the dharma of a householder.
Devala chose this
after careful deliberation

64 And, O Bharata descendant,
he attained supreme fulfilment
and supreme yoga.
The gods,
led by Bṛhaspati,
came there,

65 Along with many practisers
of tapasyā,
and praised Jaigīṣavya's tapasyā.
Finest-of-ṛṣis
Nārada
said to the gods:

66 "Jaigīṣavya has no tapasyā,
because he was showing off,
and he confused Devala."
The gods heard
wise Nārada's comment,
and said,

67 Praising mahā-muni Jaigīṣavya,
"Do not say so.
There is none greater,
there is no one
even equal
in power,

68 In energy, tapasyā
and yoga
to mahātmā Jaigīṣavya."
This is the excellent *tīrtha*
of the two mahātmās:
Asita and dharmātmā Jaigīṣavya.

69 Plough-wielding Balarāma,
remarkable performer
of wonderful deeds,
mahātmā Balarāma
bathed in that *tīrtha*,
gave wealth to Brahmins,
received fruits of his dharma,
and went to the mahā-*tīrtha*
of Soma.

SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 O descendant of Bharata!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
In that *tīrtha*,
the lord-of-planets Moon
performed the Rājasuya yajña,
and a mahā-battle was fought
with Tāraka as its cause.

2 Pure-ātmaned dharmātmā
Balarāma bathed
in that *tīrtha* and,
after distributing gifts,
proceeded to the *tīrtha*
of Sārasvata muni.

3 In the distant past,
when no rain fell
for twelve years,
Sārasvata muni
expounded the Vedas there
to the twice-born.

4 Janamejaya asked:
"When no rain fell there
for twelve years,
how did Sārasvata muni
expound the Vedas
to the twice-born?"

5 Mahārāja! (said Vaiśampāyana)
In the distant past
lived a muni of mahā-tapasyā,
a wise, sense-controlled,
celebrated brahmacārī
named Dadhīca.

6 O radiant one!
Even Śakra-Indra feared
the power of his tapasyā.
No amount of blandishments
could dissuade him
from his tapasyā.

7

So the punisher-of-Pāka,
Pākaśāsana-Indra,
to tempt him,
summoned a ravishingly attractive,
heavenly apsarā
named Alambuṣā.

8

One day, mahārāja,
when Dadhīca the mahātmā
was propitiating the gods
on the bank of the Sarasvatī,
that lovely apsarā came
and stood near him.

9

The sight
of that divinely enchanting girl
made the ātman-absorbed ṛṣi
involuntarily ejaculate,
and his semen spilled
in the Sarasvatī river.

10

O bull-brave hero!
That mahā-river,
desiring a son,
received the semen
in her womb,
and became pregnant.

11

Prabhu! Lord!
In course of time,
she gave birth
to a boy,
and she took the baby
to the ṛṣi.

12

O Indra-among-rājās!
She saw the finest of munis
sitting in a gathering of ṛṣis;
presenting the baby
to him,
Sarasvatī said:

13 “O Brahma-ṛṣi!
This is your son.
I bore him because
of my bhakti for you.
Your semen which spilled
before the apsarā Alambuṣā,

14 I cherished in my womb
because I have bhakti
for you,
and I did not want
your radiant energy
to go to waste.

15 Accept this blameless baby son
of yours
who I bring to you.”
He heard her,
and he happily
accepted the child.

16 O finest of the Bharatas!
That finest of the twice-born
lovingly smelt the head
of the baby,
and embraced him
for a long time.

17 Then mahā-munic Dadhīca
joyfully granted a boon
to Sarasvatī:
“The Viśvadevas,
pitṛs, gandharvas
and hosts of apsarās,

18 O fortune-favoured one,
will be pleased
when propitiated
with your water-oblations.”
Saying this, he praised
the mahā-river happily

19 With a heart overflowing with joy.
Listen, O king,
to his words:
"O mahā-fortune-favoured one!
You were born long ago
from the lake of Brahmā.

20 O supreme-among-streams Sarasvatī!
Known only
by the strictest-vowed munis!
Lovely lady! *Priyadarśinī!*
You who have showered
your love upon me!

21 O lovely-complexioned lady!
Vara-varṇinī!
The worlds will respect
your mahā-son,
and he will be named
after you, 'Sārasvata'.

22 Sārasvata will be extolled
for his mahā-tapasyā
by the three worlds.
When no rain falls
for twelve years,
the bull-brave twice-born

23 Will study the Vedas,
O mahā-fortune-favoured lady,
under Sārasvata.
O auspicious girl!
You will be the holiest
of all rivers,

24 O mahā-fortune-favoured one,
by my grace.'
Extolled by him
in this fashion,
and blessed with his boon,
the mahā-river

25 Left, O bull-brave Bharata,
happily,
taking the baby with her.
This was the time of rivalry
between the gods
and Dānava antigods,

26 And Śakra-Indra set out
in the three worlds
in search of weapons.
But Bhagavān Śakra-Indra
failed
to find any weapon

27 Capable of annihilating
the enemies of the gods.
Śakra-Indra
said to the gods:
"It is not possible
for these mahā-antigods,

28 Who are enemies of the gods,
to be killed
except by using Dadhīca's bones as weapons.
Excellent gods!
Go to the finest of ṛṣis,
and ask

29 Dadhīca for his bones, saying,
'We need them
to kill our enemies.' "
Requested to part
with his bones,
that finest of ṛṣis

30 Surrendered his *prāṇa*-breath
without thinking twice.
O excellent Kaurava!
Because he had pleased the gods,
he attained
the undecaying realm.

31 And Śakra-Indra was delighted,
and from the bones
of Dadhīca
he fashioned
a wide variety
of celestial weapons,

32 Including a mace, thunderbolt,
cakra,
and a heavy, massive *daṇḍa*-rod.
Dadhīca
was empowered with profound tapasyā.
The supreme ṛṣi

33 Bhṛgu, Prajāpati-Brahmā's son,
fathered
massive-bodied, world-caring Dadhīca,
whose radiance was such
it seemed he was made
of the world's very essence.

34 He was lordly and tall
and strong as a mountain,
and famed
for his glory.
Pākaśāsana-Indra
feared his might.

35 O descendant of Bharata!
Charging with mantras
that thunderbolt
created by the energy
of Brahmā,
Bhagavān Indra wrathfully

36 Killed eight hundred and ten
Daitya and Dānava
antigod warriors.
A long time passed,
and then
a mahā-fearful

37 Twelve-year-long-period
of rainlessness
blighted the land, O rājā!
Unable to survive
that twelve-year drought,
the mahā-ṛṣis

38 Started fleeing
in all the directions,
O rājā!
Seeing them scattering helter-skelter
everywhere,
Sārasvata muni

39 Also made up his mind
to go elsewhere.
That was when Sarasvatī
said to him:
"My son, do not go
anywhere else."

40 O descendant of Bharata!
She said, "For your food,
I'll supply the finest fishes."
So he stayed back,
offering oblations
to the gods and *pitṛs*,

41 Eating his meals regularly,
and continuing
his study of the Vedas
Twelve years passed,
the drought ended,
and the mahā-ṛṣis wanted to study more,

42 Because they had forgotten
the Vedas
during their hunger-driven wanderings.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Not one glorious ṛṣi
now knew the Vedas,

43 As the Vedas should
rightly be known.
And that was why
some of the ṛṣis
decided to go
to Sārasvata,

44 That finest of munis
who with disciplined ātman
pursued his Vedic studies.
They went back
and reported to the other ṛṣis:
"Limitlessly radiant Sārasvata

45 Is deeply dedicated
to Vedic studies
in a secluded forest."
Hearing this,
O rājā Janamejaya,
the mahā-ṛṣis

46 Went to the finest-of-munis Sārasvata
and said:
"O muni!
Be so gracious
as to teach us
the Vedas."

47 And he said to them:
"Become my pupils
as enjoined by tradition."
The assembly of munis
said to him:
"Son, you are still a child."

48 And he answered the munis:
"I do not want my dharma
to suffer.
Who teaches from adharma,
and who learns
with adharma –

49 Both deteriorate in character,
both become
bitter enemies.
Age, grey hair, wealth, family
do not make
a rsi great.

50 According to dharma,
that ṛṣi alone is great
who can discourse on the Vedas."
The munis listened
to these words
of Sārasvata,

51 And studied the Vedas
under him,
and so cherished their dharma.
Sixty thousand munis
in this way
became the pupils

52 Of the Brahmin ṛṣi Sārasvata
and studied the Vedas under him.
All of them
would bring for him
a fistful each
of sacred *darbha*-grass.

53 Distributing lavishly
at all the *tīrthas*,
Keśava-Krishna's elder brother,
Rohiṇī's
mahā-powerful son
Balarāma
happily proceeded
to that mahā-*tīrtha*
where, it was said,
there lived a famed
elderly lady
who was a virgin.

SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!" Janamejaya asked.
"Why did that girl
practise severe tapasyā,
and what vows did she take?

2 O Brahmin! I want to know all
about this difficult
and excellent dedication to tapasyā.
I want all the details."

3 O rājā! (replied Vaiśampāyana)
A mahā-illustrious
and maha-energetic ṛṣi Kuṇigarga
long ago
practised profound tapasyā.
That incomparable tapasyā-ṛṣi

4 Produced from his mind
a lovely-eye-browed,
radiant daughter.
Seeing her,
mahā-illustrious Kuṇigarga
was overjoyed.

5 Not too long after that,
O rājā Janamejaya,
he renounced his body
and went to heaven.
That gracious, lovely-eye-browed,
lotus-eyed girl,

6 A child of blameless character,
lived in the āshram
and practised mahā-tapasyā,
fasting,
and offering pūjā-respect to
pitṛs and gods.

7 O king! A long time passed,
and her tapasyā continued.
Kuṇigarga had tried very hard
to bestow
his blameless daughter in marriage,
but she refused,

8 Because she could see
no man anywhere
worthy of her.
So, with rigorous tapasyā
she emaciated her body,
and passed her days

9 In an uninhabited forest,
worshipping *pitṛs* and gods.
Arduous was her dedication,
but so was her determination,
and she was perfectly happy
with herself.

10 But time passed,
O Indra-among-rājās,
and she grew old and weak.
In course of time,
she became so feeble
she could not walk,

11 And it was then she decided
to leave this world
and go to the other world.
Realising that
she wanted to be free,
Nārada said to her:

12 "O defectless lady
of mahā-strict vows!
I have heard from the gods
you are a virgin.
You have not passed through
the marriage *saṁskāra*-ritual.

13 You cannot hope to attain,
despite your tapasyā,
the most excellent realm."
She heard Nārada,
and she said
to the assembly of ṛṣis:

14 "O finest of men!
I will give half my tapasyā
to whoever marries me."
The first to come forward
to take her hand in marriage
was Gālava's son,

15 Ṛṣi Śṛṅgavān, who said:
"I will take
you hand in marriage,
O lovely one,
but only
on one condition:

16 You will spend
only one night with me
after we are married."
She agreed,
and the two of them
were married.

17 Observing all the rites
as enjoined by tradition,
pouring libations
in the sacred fire,
Gālava's son took her hand
in marriage.

18 O rājā! That night,
celestially dressed
and ornamented,
that lovely-complexioned lady
was transformed
into a radiant young girl.

19 Gālava's son Śṛṅgavān
passed that night ecstatically
with that girl
of flaming beauty.
In the morning,
she said to him:

20 "O finest of tapasyā-practising Brahmins!
The condition you made,
I have kept.
Svasti te-astu! Bhadraṃ te!
May you prosper!
Give me leave to go."

21 Before leaving, she added:
"Whoever comes
with a disciplined mind
to this *tīrtha*,
stays one night, and propitiates the gods
with water-oblations,

22 Will obtain the pious merit
that accrues
to a person
who has practised brahmacarya
for a period
of fifty-eight years."

23 So saying, that saintly lady
discarded her body
and went to heaven,
and the ṛṣi stayed back,
sorrowfully remembering
her radiant beauty.

24 It was hard for him,
but he accepted
the agreed-upon half
of her tapasyā;
then he too left his body
and followed in her footsteps.

25 O descendant of Bharata!
He was haunted and tormented
by her beauty.
This is the story
of the old virgin,
her mahā-character,

26 Her brahmacarya,
and her auspicious
attainment of heaven.
There, in that *tīrtha*,
Halāyudha plough-carrying Balarāma
heard of Śalya's death.

27 Foe-destroying Balarāma
made lavish gifts
to the twice-born,
and mourned the death
of Śalya in battle
at the hands of the Pāṇḍavas.

28 Then Mādhava-Balarāma
made his way
to Samanta-pañcaka,
where he enquired
from the ṛṣis about the fruits
of Kurukṣetra-*tīrtha*.

29 *Prabhu*! Lord Janamejaya!
On his enquiring,
the mahātmās there
gave the lion-like
Yādava Balarāma
the results and fruits of Kurukṣetra.

SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 Balarāma! (said the *ṛṣis*)
Samanta-pañcaka
is an eternal *tīrtha*.
It is the northern
vedi-altar
of Prajāpati-Brahmā.
The mahā-boon-granting gods
performed many yajñas
here in the past.

2 The wise and radiant
finest of rājā-ṛṣis
mahātmā Kuru
tended this field
over many years
in the distant past.
That is the reason
it is called Kurukṣetra,
the field of the Kurus.

3 "O tapasyā-rich ṛṣis,"
Balarāma asked,
"Why did mahātmā Kuru
tend this field?
This is what I want to know
from you."

4 Balarāma! (replied the ṛṣis)
What we have heard is that,
in the past,
Kuru was tending this field,
and Śakra-Indra came
and asked him why.

5 "O rājā!" said Indra.
"Why this hard work?
What is it you want,
O rājā-ṛṣi,
that makes you tend
this field so diligently?"

6 "O Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices,"
replied Kuru,
"all who perish in this field
shall attain
the evil-free realms."

7 Śakra-Indra laughed at him,
and returned
to his heavenly realm.
In no way discouraged,
rājā-ṛṣi Kuru continued
to cultivate the field.

8 Śatakratu-Indra would turn up
repeatedly,
receive the same reply from him,
make fun of him,
and return
to his heavenly realm.

9 Śakra-Indra noticed
the tapasyā with which
the rājā-ṛṣi continued
to till the field,
so he reported the matter
to the gods.

10 The gods said to thousand-eyed
Sahasrākṣa-Indra:
"Sakra-Indra!
If possible,
let us grant him a boon,
and stop him.

11 If men dying here
will go straight to heaven
without performance
of yajñas,
then our very existence
is in peril."

12 So Śakra-Indra went
to the rājā-ṛṣi and said:
"Why all this
useless effort?
Listen to what
I have to say.

13 All humans, birds and beasts
who die here by fasting,
O king,
with their senses alert,
and all who die here
in battle –

14 Will go straight to heaven,
O mahā-minded
Indra-among-rājās."
Rājā Kuru heard,
and replied, "So be it,"
to Śakra-Indra;

15 And slayer-of-the-antigod-
Bala Indra
heard him,
and with a delighted ātman
he quickly went back
to heaven.

16 O finest of the Yādavas!
This is the story of how,
in the past,
Kuru tilled the field,
and Śakra-Indra, Brahmā and the gods
gave him the boon.

17 There is no place on earth
more holy and merit-bestowing
than this.
Any person
who stays here,
and practises supreme tapasyā.

18 Attains the undeteriorating realm
of Brahman
after discarding his body.
And any person
who with piety gives away
anything in charity here,

19 Will find whatever
he has given in charity
multiplied a thousandfold.
And any person
who stays here with his mind
fixed on goodness,

20 Will never have to see
the realm
of the god of death Yama.
Any lord-of-men
who performs
mahā-ritual sacrifices here,

21 Will live in heaven
for as long as this world lasts.
The *gāthā*-chant
that was chanted
by lord-of-the-gods
Śakra-Indra himself

22 On Kuruksetra – listen
to this, Halāyudha-Balarāma.
"Even the dust of Kurukṣetra
blown by wind or stream
will ferry the worst ill-doer
to the State Supreme."

23 Performing many mahā-yajñas here,
the gods,
incomparable Brahmins, Nṛga
and other earth-lords,
discarding their bodies,
went to heaven, O lion-among-men!

24 The land that lies between
Tarantuka, Arantuka,
Rāmahṛda and Macakruka
is Kuruksetra-Samantapañcaka.
It is the northern *vedī*-altar
of Prajāpati-Brahmā:

25 Auspicious, mahā-merit-bestowing,
loved by the gods,
blessed by all the guṇas.
That is why kings
who die in battle here
attain the beathless holy realm."

26 These words werespoken by
Śakra-Indra, Brahmā
and the gods, and they
have the approval
of Brahmā, Viṣṇu,
and Maheśvara-Śiva.

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Distributing gifts lavishly at Kurukṣetra,
Sātvata-Balarāma
went to a celestial mahā-āshram.

2 *Madhuka*-trees
and mango-trees,
the *plakṣa* waved-leaf fig-tree,
the *nyagrodha*-banyan,
the *panaṣa*-breadfruit,
the white *arjuna*, –

3 The finest-of-the-Yadavas
Balarāma
saw all these auspicious trees,
and he asked the ṛṣis:
"Whose
is this excellent ashram?"

4 O rājā! The mahātmās replied
to plough-weaponed
Halāyudha-Balarāma:
"Let us first, Balarāma,
tell you all about who first
lived in this āshram.

5 This is where in the past
the divinity Viṣṇu
practised the finest tapasyā,
this is where
he performed
all the Sanātana Yajñas.

6 This is where, from her childhood,
a Brahmin girl,
a brahmacāriṇī devoted to yoga,
practised tapasyā,
found fulfilment,
and went to heaven.

7 O rājā! This lovely-minded
śrīmatī brahmacāriṇī,
this girl of innocent simplicity
and strict vows
was the daughter
of mahātmā Śāṇḍilya.

8 Fulfilled in her tapasyā –
a most arduous tapasyā
for women –
pūjā-respected by gods and Brahmins,
that mahā-fortune-favoured girl
attained heaven."

9 Balarāma of unfading glory
heard these words
and entered their āshram.
After bidding them farewell,
and performing
beside the Himālayas

10 The sacred rites and ceremonies
at evening-*saṁdhyā*,
he began the mountain ascent.
Palmyra-bannered Tāladhvaja
powerful Balarāma
had not climbed too far

11 When he saw a wonderfully
auspicious *tīrtha*
that left him breathless –
the Plakṣaprasravaṇa *tīrtha*
at the source
of the Sarasvatī river.

12 Proceeding next to the excellent
Kārapavana *tīrtha*,
mahā-powerful plough-weaponed
Halāyudha-Balarāma
distributed lavishly
in charity there,

13 After bathing in its cool,
clear sacred waters,
and offering water-oblations
to the *pitṛs*
and revering the gods.
Brave-in-battle

14 Balarāma spent one night
at that *tīrtha*,
with ascetics and Brahmins;
then Balarāma
of unfading glory
went to the Mitrāvaruṇa *tīrtha*,

15 Where Indra, Agni and Aryamā
lived happily
in the past,
on the bank
of the Yamunā.
From the Kārapavana,

16

Mahā-powerful dharmātmā
Balarāma went there,
and joyfully bathed
in its waters.
Then, in the company of ṛṣis
and perfected Siddhas,

17

Bull-brave Yādava Balarāma
sat and listened
to enchanting *kathā*-narratives.
While he was there,
sitting with them,
the bhagavān ṛṣi Nārada

18

Arrived at the very spot
where Balarāma was sitting.
His hair
was a maṇḍala of matted locks,
his dress was golden.
Mahā-tapasyā-practising

19

Nārada, O rājā Janamejaya,
carried a golden rod
and a *kamaṇḍalu*-waterpot
and a melody-making
beautiful tortoise-shell vīṇā,
the *kacchapī*.

20

He loved singing and dancing.
He received pūjā-respect
from gods
and Brahmins.
He loved provoking people.
He was a mischief-maker.

21

He stopped at the exact spot
where Balarāma was sitting.
Balarāma rose,
and offered
his pūjā-respect
to the vow-dedicated

22 Deva-ṛṣi Narada,
and then enquired
about the health of the Kauravas.
Then, O rājā,
all-dharma-knowing Nārada
informed him

23 That the Kaurava dynasty
was on the point
of being exterminated.
Deeply shocked,
Rohiṇī's son Balarāma
said to Nārada:

24 "O tapasyā-rich ṛṣi!
I already know
what has been
the fate
of all the Kṣatriya
kings and rulers.

25 I am very eager
to know everything
in every detail."
Narada replied:
"First died Bhīṣma;
then Droṇa, the Sindhu-lord

26 Jayadrathā; then Vaikartana-Karṇa
and all
his mahā-chariot-hero sons.
O Rauhaṇa-Balarāma!
The Bhūriśravas, and the
valiant Madra-rājā Śalya.

27 Many mahā-powerful warriors,
and many others
have given up
their dearly loved lives
for the sake of victory
for Kaurava Duryodhana –

28 Many never-retreating-in-battle
rājās
and sons of rājās.
O mahā-muscled
Mādhava-Balarāma!
The still alive are:

29 Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman,
and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.
These are the three
surviving foe-crushing heroes
of the army
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son.

30 Even these three, O Balarāma,
have fled in fear
in all the directions.
After Śalya's death,
and the flight of Kṛpa
and the others, Duryodhana

31 In desperate distress
hid himself
in Lake Dvaipāyana.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son closed the waters
over him
and concealed himself,

32 And then the Pāṇḍavas
and Krishna came
and started insulting him.
When, O Balarāma,
he heard those bitter words,
powerful

33 And brave Duryodhana emerged
from the lake,
brandishing his mahā-mace,
and prepared himself
for a duel
with Bhīma.

34 O Balarāma!
A terrible duel
is going to be fought
between them today.
If you are curious
to watch it, Mādhava,
then come with me and see
this horrendous clash
between your two pupils."

35 After listening to Nārada,
Balarāma revered the bull-brave twice-born,
took leave,
and ordered all his followers:

36 "Return immediately to Dvārakā!"
He descended
from the Plakṣaprasravaṇa *tīrtha*
on the auspicious mountain;

37 After listening
to the mahā-merits
accruing from the *tīrtha*,
Balarāma of unfading glory
chanted these ślokas
to the assembled Brahmins:

38 "The joy that comes
from living near
the Sarasvatī river
is a joy without peer.
Nowhere will you find,
however hard you see,
the merits that flow
from the Sarasvatī.
Even in heaven,
that river's devotee
remembers and cherishes
only the Sarasvatī.

39 Purest of rivers
Sarasvatī!
World-well-wishing
Sarasvatī!
Remover of evil
Sarasvatī!
In this world and the next
Sarasvatī!"

40 Scorcher-of-foes
Balarāma
with loving eyes
kept looking back
at Sarasvatī
the lovable river
again and again
as he mounted
his excellent chariot
pulled by excellent horses.

41 And soon enough,
in that swift chariot,
bull-brave Yādava Balarāma
arrived at the lake
to witness the duel
between his two pupils.

SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 O Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
It was a colossal war
and deeply grieving Dhṛtarāṣṭra
questioned Sañjaya about it.

2 "Sañjaya," asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"when my son Duryodhana
saw Balarāma approach,
how did he fight Bhīma?"

3 Your son Duryodhana,
    a mahā-muscled warrior,
(replied Sañjaya)
    always ready to fight,
was happy
    seeing Balarāma there.

4 O descendant of Bharata!
    Seeing Balarāma,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira stood up,
    revered plough-wielding
Lāṅgalin-Balarāma,
    and affectionately

5 Gave him a seat to sit on,
    and enquired
about his health.
    To Yudhiṣṭhira,
Balarāma spoke
    these words,

6 Sweet words, filled with dharma,
    meant for the welfare
of heroic warriors:
    "O finest of rājās!
I have heard
    from ṛṣis

7 That Kurukṣetra is a pure,
    sacred *tīrtha*,
equal to heaven itself,
    revered by gods
and ṛṣis
    and mahātmā Brahmins.

8 O venerable one!
    Those who discard their bodies
on a field of battle
    are said to live
in heaven
    with Śakra-Indra.

9 Which is why, O king,
I am hurrying
to Samanta-pañcaka,
which is revered
in the world of the gods
as Prajāpati-Brahmā's northern *vedī*.

10 Anyone who perishes in battle
in that eternal,
mahā-merit-bestowing place,
unparalleled
in all the three worlds,
will surely attain heaven."

11 O mahārāja Janamejaya!
"*Tatheti*! So be it!"
said *prabhu*-lord Yudhiṣṭhira,
and so, the valiant son of Kuntī
proceeded
towards Samanta-pañcaka.

12 And rājā Duryodhana too,
boiling with anger,
carrying his massive mace,
followed the Pāṇḍavas
on foot
to Samanta-pañcaka.

13 Exclaiming *"Sādhu! Sādhu!*
Ex-cellent! Excellent!"
the gods in the sky
applauded Duryodhana,
clad in armour,
carrying his mace.

14 And the Vātikas and Cāraṇas
saw him too,
and were overjoyed.
Surrounded by the Pāṇḍavas,
your son,
the Kaurava-rājā

15 Duryodhana strode
with the majestic grace
of a musth Indra-among-elephants.
The deafening din
of conches
and *bheri*-wardrums

16 And the lion-roars of victory
of the warriors
echoed on all sides.
All those finest of finest of men
arrived
in Kurukṣetra,

17 As did your son,
after a journey
facing direct westward.
That excellent *tīrtha*
was on the southern bank
of the Sarasvatī.

18 They selected a spot
that was not sandy
for the mace-duel.
Clad in armour,
and wielding a mace of mahā-thickness,
Bhīma

19 Stood there, O mahārāja,
like Garutmat-Garuḍa,
ready for combat.
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Your son looked like
golden rājā-of-mountains Meru,

20 As he stood there
with dazzling golden armour
and head-gear.
Clad in armour,
the two valiant heroes
Bhīma and Duryodhana

21 Looked as resplendent
in their fury
as two musth elephants.
In that combat
maṇḍala-arena
the two bull-brave cousin-brothers

22 Looked, mahārāja,
like the newly resen sun
and the radiant moon.
Eager to crush each other
like two elephants,
the infuriated

23 Combatants, O rājā,
glared at each other
with incinerating anger-inflamed eyes.
O rājā!
Wielding his mace,
joy-inspired Kaurava Duryodhana

24 Licked his lips, O rājā.
His eyes were red with wrath,
O rājā,
as that valiant hero
swung
his mace

25 And challenged his opponent,
as one elephant
challenges another.
In the same way,
valiant Bhīma too,
with his iron mace,

26 Challenged king Duryodhana
like a forest-lion
challenging another.
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
and Duryodhana waited,
maces upraised,

27 On the field,
resplendent like two tall
mountain peaks.
Anger suffused them,
valour energised
both of them.

28 In mace-combat,
both were brilliant pupils
of Rohiṇī's son Balarāma.
Their feats equalled
those of Yama
and Vāsava-Indra,

29 And those of Varuṇa,
for they were both mahā-powerful.
Their feats equalled those
of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and Balarāma,
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,

30 And also those, mahārāja,
of Madhu and Kaiṭabha;
their feats
equalled those
of Sunda
and Upasunda,

31 And Rāma and Rāvaṇa,
and Bāli and Sugrīva.
O foe-chastiser!
They resembled
Cosmic Time Kāla
and Mṛtyu-Death.

32 Like two mahā-elephants
maddened by lust
for a she-elephant
in autumn,
these two, maddened by power,
rushed at each other.

33 Like two *uraga*-serpents
spitting venom
at each other,
these two foe-crushers
spat hate-poison
at each other.

34 Those two lions
of the Bharata dynasty,
both experts
in mace-combat,
were like two
undefeatable beasts.

35 They were like two
formidable nail-clawing
and teeth-biting tigers,
like two clashing
agitated oceans
at the time of the world's dissolution.

36 The two infuriated
mahā-chariot-heroes clashed
like two auspicious planets.
Like cloud-masses
from east and west colliding
in the rainy season,

37 The foe-chastisers growled
their war-cries
the instant they saw each other.
The two mahātmās
were mahā-powerful,
blinding, ray-flashing

38 Finest of the Kauravas,
like two doom-dispensing suns
at the time
of Kāla-dissolution.
Like two growling tigers,
two rumbling clouds,

39 Two roaring lions,
were these elated
mahā-powerful heroes;
like two roused elephants,
like two
blazing fires;

40 Like two
tall-peaked mountains
were these two mahātmās.
Their lips trembled
as they stared fixedly
at each other –

41 Two finest of men,
two mahātmās,
armed with maces.
Both bursting
with joyous energy,
both respectworthy,

42 Neighing like horses,
trumpeting like elephants,
snorting like bulls –
these two:
Duryodhana
and wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma –

43 Both finest of men,
brilliantly brave
like Daitya-antigods.
O rājā!
Then Duryodhana
said to Yudhiṣṭhira,

44 Who was surrounded
by his brothers,
mahātmā Krishna,
and illimitably powerful Balarāma,
these words
of serious import,

45 In the presence also
of the Kekayas, Sṛñjayas,
and mahā-ātmaned Pāñcālas:
"This battle
between me
and Bhīma –

46 O bull-brave kings,
be so good as to sit down
and witness it."
They heard Duryodhana,
and did
as requested.

47 The entire maṇḍala of rājās
sat down –
looking as resplendent
as the radiant maṇḍala
of the sun
high in the sky.

48 Mahārāja! In the centre
of that assembly
sat Keśava-Krishna's
elder brother,
mahā-muscled, pujā-respected
Śrīmān Balarāma,

49 Fair-complexioned,
blue-robed,
shining among those rājās
like the full moon
among the planets
on a dark night.

50 Mahārāja!
There they stood,
those irrepressible heroes,
maces in hand,
mouthing bitter words
at each other.

51 Spewing distasteful insults
at each other,
those two excellent Kauravas
faced each other,
like Śakra-Indra
and the antigod Vṛtra.

SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 O Janamejaya!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
What a tumultuous exchange
of ugly words
took place
between Bhīma and Duryodhana!
This troubled
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
so much
that he said to Sañjaya:

2 "O blameless one!
How shameful that this
should happen to a man!
My son Duryodhana
commanded
eleven *akṣauhiṇis.*

3 He ordered so many kings,
he enjoyed
the wealth of the world.
And now – reduced to this,
mace in hand,
fighting on foot!

4 Master of the world, my son,
now, mace in hand,
fighting on foot like a slave!
It's all fate!
The hand of fate!
What else can you say?

5 Aho! Sañjaya!
Look at the mahā-sorrow
of my poor son!"
The anguished lord of men
said this,
and lapsed into silence.

6 Snorting lustily like a bull
(continued Sañjaya),
your son joyfully
roared his challenge to Bhīma
with a voice
that rumbled like a cloud.

7 As soon as the mahātmā rājā
of the Kauravas
flung his challenge
at Bhīma,
many evil omens
suddenly materialised.

8 Fierce winds blew,
lightning thundered,
a dust-storm raged.
Without warning,
all the directions
mysteriously darkened.

9 The sky became
a mahā-deafening cacophony
of hurled thunderbolts,
and hundreds
of horripilating meteors
crashed on the earth.

10 O lord of the world!
No dark fortnight,
yet Rāhu began to swallow the sun.
Mahā-trembling
afflicted
the tree-and-forest-covered earth.

11 And a dry wind blew,
scattering dust and debris.
Mountain peaks
sundered
and toppled
on the earth.

12 Malformed beasts scattered
in all directions.
Horrendous, fearful-faced
she-jackals
with flaming mouths
wailed piteously.

13 O Indra-among-rājās!
Everywhere mahā-fierce,
hair-raising noises,
the directions aflame,
and inauspicious animals
appearing out of nowhere.

14 O king!
Water-levels started
rising in wells,
and everywhere was heard
the clamour
of disembodied voices.

15 Seeing all these
inauspicious omens
around him,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
said to his elder brother
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

16 "Wicked-ātmaned Suyodhana-Duryodhana
can never defeat me
in combat.
The anger I have hidden
in my heart so long,
I will today unleash it

[IX:56:17-22]

Transcreated by P. Lal

17 On the Indra-of-the-Kauravas
Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
as Arjuna unleashed fire
on the Khāṇḍava forest.
Today I will pluck out
the thorn in your heart.

18 I will today kill
this criminal corrupter
of the Kaurava clan,
and place the garland of fame
around
your neck.

19 I will with my mace
kill this doer
of evil deeds,
and with my mace
shatter his body
into a hundred pieces.

20 He will never enter
the city of Hastināpura again.
He slipped
a venomous serpent in my bed,
he put poison
in my food,

21 He tried to drown me
in Pramāṇakoṭi,
burn us in the lacquer house,
mock us in the sabhā,
he tried to rob us
of all we had,

22 Sent us to a twelve-year exile,
and another year
in disguise –
O blameless bull-brave Bharata,
I will make him pay
for all this today!

23 I will kill him,
and cancel the debt
that I owe him.
The days of this wicked
indisciplined-ātmaned son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
are over.

24 O finest of the Bharatas!
No more darshan for him
of his mother and father!
O Indra-among-rājās!
All the joys of this wicked rājā
of the Kauravas

25 Will end today! Mahārāja!
No more darshans for him
of lovely girls!
Bereft of glory
and kingdom and life,
he will lie on the earth –

26 This shame on the dynasty
of the rājā-of-the Kauravas
Śāntanu!
And rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
today will get news
of his son's death –

27 And that will make him recall
the evil deeds
he ordered with Śakuni's advice."
O tiger-among-rājās!
Saying this, Bhīma,
valiantly raising his mace,

28 Challenged Duryodhana to combat,
like Śakra-Indra
challenging Vṛtra.
But the moment
his eyes fell
on his Kailāsa hill-huge opponent,

29 Bhīma lost his temper again,
and said
to Duryodhana:
"What you
and rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
together did

30 In Vāraṇāvata –
recall now
that heinous deed!
Insulting Draupadī,
who was in her period,
in front of the sabhā,

31 Inciting Saubala-Śakuni
to cheat rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
in the dice-game,
the mahā-miseries
we faced in the forest
because of you,

32 And our having to survive
in the capital of Virāṭa
like passing through a second yoni –
all this I will avenge today!
My good fortune
you are here, you scoundrel!

33 It's because of you
that the illustrious son of Gaṅgā,
Bhīṣma, finest of chariot-heroes,
is lying on a bed of arrows,
killed in battle by Śikhaṇḍin,
the son of Yajñasena-Drupada.

34 Droṇa is dead,
and Karṇa is dead,
and illustrious Śalya too,
and that incomparable fanner
of the fire of hatred and discord, Śakuni,
is dead too.

35 And so is the doorkeeper Prātikāmin,
who harassed Draupadī
no end.
And your brave brothers,
so brilliant in battle –
they are dead too.

36 And so many other kings also –
all dead –
and all because of you!
And have no doubt –
you will die too today –
my mace will kill you."

37 O Indra-among-rājās!
Your truly valiant son
heard these noisy words,
and replied
to wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma:

38 "Vṛkodara-Bhīma!
Why all this noise?
Fight me!
You family-defiler!
Today I'll wipe out the śraddhā
you have for fighting!

39 You wretch!
Go frighten other people
like you –
you cannot frighten
Duryodhana
with your noisy words.

40 Long have I wanted
to face you
in a mace-duel.
The gods have been
very kind indeed –
my wish is granted.

41 Wicked-minded scoundrel!
What's the point
of all this big talk
of what you can do?
Why don't you put your words
into action?"

42 All the rājās
and the Somakas
heard these words
of Duryodhana,
and praised him
highly.

43 Their pūjā-respect
thrilled the Kaurava descendant
Duryodhana.
His hair stood on end.
He readied himself
for the mace-combat.

44 Like hunters rousing
an elephant to anger
with loud clapping,
the rulers of men there
inflamed
the already infuriated Duryodhana.

45 Mahātmā Pāṇḍava wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
lifted his mace
and attacked
your mahātmā son
Duryodhana.

46 And suddenly,
elephants trumpeted,
and horses neighed,
and the weapons
of the Pāṇḍavas glowed
with an eerie brilliance.

SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 Attacked by Bhīma (said Sañjaya),
unperturbed Duryodhana
stepped forward skilfully
to meet his challenger.

2 They clashed like two
large-horned bulls,
and the collision reverberated
like thunderclaps.

3 Each bent on victory,
their encounter
was like the one
between Indra and Prahlada –
fierce, tumultuous,
and horripilating.

4 Bradishing their maces,
their bodies splotched
with blood,
the two determined heroes
resembled
two secret-flowering *kiṁśuka* trees.

5 Sparks flashed
from their clashing maces
in that mahā-combat,
turning the sky
into a field
of sparkling fireflies.

6 As that ceaseless
tumultuous clash
between the two
continued,
both foe-crushing heroes
became tired.

7 Briefly, they rested.
Then, once again,
the two foe-scorching heroes
with their beautiful
colourful maces
recommenced combat.

8 The two bull-brave
mahā-warriors rested,
and fought again
like two musth elephants
over a she-elephant.
Seeing the two

9 Valiant combatants
brandishing their maces,
the gods, gandharvas
and humans
were overcome
with supreme wonder.

10 They saw, all of them,
Duryodhana
and wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
whirl their maces,
and none could tell
who would win.

11 When the two strongest
of the strong cousin-brothers
recommenced
their clever footwork,
each sought for advantage
of the other's error.

12 Like the rod of Yama
the god of death,
like Indra's thunderbolt,
O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
did Bhīma's upraised mace
appear to the spectators;

13 And when, in that combat,
Bhīma whirled it,
the deafening and fearful noise
it made
kept reverberating
for a long time.

14 Even your son Duryodhana
was stupefied
by the noisy velocity
of the whirling mace
of his enemy,
Pāṇḍava Bhīma.

15 O descendant of Bharata!
The maṇḍala-movements
of Bhīma –
the agility of wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma –
it was wonderful!

16 The way they manoeuvred
round each other
for an opening –
like two cats
squabbling
over a tasty titbit.

17 Amazing and varied
were the maṇḍala-movements
of Bhīma –
sometimes rushing forward,
sometimes
skipping back.

18 A complex mixture
of movements –
swiftly stepping
from one spot
to another,
warding off
the opponent's attack,
blocking weapon
with weapon,
skilfully swerving
right and left . . .

19 *Abhidravaṇa*: rushing forward;
ākṣeya: nullifying the enemy's weapon;
avasthāna: standing warily still;
vigraha: standing still and fighting;
parāvartana: attacking from all sides;
samvartana: blocking the enemy's weapon;
avapluta: ducking the enemy's weapon;
upapluta: jumping to evade a weapon;

20 *Apanyasta* : circling
and attacking; –
both were consumate experts
in mace-combat,
both incomparable
in footwork.

21 What a superb display
of dexterity
and mutual deception
was exhibited
by both these powerful
Kaurava heroes!

22 It was a war-game
being played
by these two
foe-crushing heroes
on the field
of mace-combat.

23 Like two tusk-mangled
blood-drenched elephants,
were these two combatants,
mahārāja,
gorily glorious
with each other's blood.

24 O foe-scorching monarch!
That fearful,
grisly mace-combat
continued till evening,
resembling the clash
between Vṛtra and Vāsava-Indra.

25 O rājā! Armed with maces,
they repeated
their maṇḍala-manoeuvres,
your son Duryodhana
adopting the right-maṇḍala
position,

26 And Bhīma adopting
the left-maṇḍala position.
While Bhīma
was circling
in that position
on the field,

27 Duryodhana struck him,
O mahārāja,
a blow on his rib.
O Bharata descendant!
That blow by your son
left Bhīma

28 Unconcerned, as it were,
and he started
whirling his mace.
Like Indra's thunderbolt
and Yama's rod –
that was how

29 Bhīma's fierce upraised mace appeared,
O mahārāja,
to the spectators.
Seeing Bhīma
with his mace,
your son Duryodhana,

30 Your foe-scorching son
smashed his fearsome mace
on Bhīma's mace.
O descendant of Bharata!
The wind-vehement mace-attack
of your son

31 Resounded like thunder,
and sparks
shot up into the sky.
Circling
with various strategies
and maṇḍala-manoeuvres,

32 Energetic Suyodhana-Duryodhana
at the time
shone with greater glory.
And Bhīma's mace,
that massive weapon,
whirled with incredible velocity,

33 Burst into smoke
and incandescent sparks.
Seeing Bhīma
whirling his mace,
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
also

34 Started
whirling his own huge mace –
an inspiring sight!
Seeing the wind-vehement velocity
of the mace
of that mahātmā,

35 The Pāṇḍavas
and the Somākas
were gripped by fear.
Delighting in displaying
their war-game
on the field of combat,

36 The two enemy-crushers
continued to attack each other.
Indeed,
like two tusk-mangled,
blood-drenched elephants,
were these

37 Two combatants, mahārāja,
gorily glorious
with each other's blood.
And so it was:
that fearful,
grisly mace-combat

38 Continued till evening,
resembling the clash
between Vṛtra and Vāsava-Indra
Then your mahā-powerful son,
seeing
Bhīma standing still,

39 With swift foot-strategy,
caught Kuntī's son Bhīma
by surprise.
The gold-filigreed
mahā-formidable mace of Duryodhana,
by Bhīma,

40 In a burst of anger,
was smashed
with his own iron mace.
Sparks scattered
as a result
of that impact,

41 O mahārāja, and it seemed
  that two thunderbolts
had collided.
  The speed with which
Bhīma thudded
  his mace

42 Made the entire earth shake,
  O mahārāja.
On the field of combat,
  Kaurava Duryodhana
was unable to bear Bhīma's
  swift attack on his mace,

43 Just as one musth elephant
  cannot brook
the presence of a rival.
  Keeping to the left
maṇḍala-manoeuvre,
  rājā Duryodhana decided

44 To strike Bhīma's head
  with his fearful mace –
which he did.
  Struck in this manner
by your son,
  Pāṇḍava Bhīma

45 Remained absolutely unmoved,
  O mahārāja –
an incredible spectacle!
  O rājā!
All the warriors marvelled
  at the fact

46 That, though hit by the mace,
  Bhīma did not move
even the least bit.
  Instead, his gold-filigreed,
massively heavy,
  radiant mace –

47 Brilliantly brave Bhīma
hurled it swiftly
at Duryodhana,
who,
unperturbed mahā-powerful hero,
repulsed it

48 With ease.
That was a mahā-wonderful feat
of Duryodhana.
O rājā!
When the frustrated mace of Bhīma
fell,

49 And hit the ground,
the earth shook
with a thunderous noise.
Leaping expertly
in the *kauśika*-manoeuvre
again and again,

50 When he saw
that Bhīma
was without his mace,
finest-of-the Kauravas
Duryodhana resorted
to trickery –

51 That infuriated mahā-powerful
hero struck Bhīma
in the chest.
That devastating blow of the mace
stunned Bhīma
on the field,

52 So much so that he even forgot
for a moment
what he was fighting for.
O rājā!
The pathetic state of Bhīma
made the Somakas and Pāṇḍavas

53 Utterly depressed –
they lost all hope,
all confidence.
But that attack
roused Bhīma even more;
like one elephant

54 Rushing on another,
he redoubled his attack
on your son.
Picking up his mace,
Bhīma leapt
upon your son

55 Like a lion
rushing
on a wild elephant.
O rājā!
The consumate expert of mace-attack,
Bhīma

56 Warily moved to a point
of advantage
near your son,
and struck his mace
on Duryodhana's rib
with tremendous force.

57 So powerful was the blow
that rājā Duryodhana
fell on his knees
on the field.
The Sṛñjayas, O lord of the earth,
shouted joyfully.

58 The shouts of the Sṛñjayas,
O bull-brave hero,
made
the-finest-of-the-Kaurava-clan
Duryodhana,
balanced on his knees,

59 Stand up determinedly.
Your mahā-muscled son Duryodhana,
livid with anger,
sighed heavily,
breathing
like a mahā-nāga serpent,

60 And staring at Bhīma
as if to burn him to ashes
with his gaze.
Mace lifted high,
that excellent Bharata hero
rushed

61 At Bhīma furiously,
with one sole aim –
to shatter Bhīma's head.
Brilliantly brave mahātmā Duryodhana
attacked
mahātmā Bhīma,

62 Who remained as unmoved
and unmovable as a mountain.
O rājā!
But blood
did stream from the wound
in Bhīma's head,
like rutting juice streaming
from a musth elephant.

63 Then the elder brother
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
with a fresh display
of incredible valour,
lifted his iron
foe-killing mace
which boomed like thunder
and thunderbolt,
and attacked Duryodhana.

64 Struck by the mace,
trembling all over,
as if his body
was breaking into pieces,
your son collapsed
and fell on the field,
like a storm-uprooted
flowering śāla-tree
in a forest.

65 When they saw your son
fall on the field,
the Pāṇḍavas broke
into shouts of joy.
But your son recovered,
and rose to his feet.
At that time he looked
like a huge elephant
emerging from a lake.

66 The brimming-with-anger
mahā-chariot-hero
king Duryodhana,
like a skilled warrior,
rose to his feet,
and attacked the Pāṇḍava.
This time it was Bhīma
who fell asprawl
on the field.

67 Sending Bhīma sprawling
on the field of combat,
Kaurava Duryodhana
roared like a lion.
Such was the strength
with which he struck,
that the thunder-strong
armour of Bhīma
shattered on impact.

68 When all this happened,
mahā-consternation
afflicted the apsarās
and gods in the sky.
And simultaneously,
from the hands of the gods
there rained from the sky
a celestial downpour
of fragrant flowers.

69 When they saw that the armour
of Bhīma was smashed,
and finest-of-men Bhīma
asprawl on the field,
and the might of Kaurava
Duryodhana unaffected,
the minds of our enemies
were filled with fear
of impending defeat.

70 But Bhīma soon regained
control of his senses,
and wiping the blood
from his face, he slowly,
with intense effort,
rose to his feet;
slowly he opened
his eyes, and prepared
for renewed combat.

71 Valiant-like-Yama
Nakula and Sahadeva,
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and the heroic grandson
of Śini, Sātyaki,
shouting "I will fight!
I will fight!"
taunted Duryodhana,
and rushed to attack him.

72 But Pāṇḍava Bhīma
firmly restrained them,
and himself proceeded
to attack afresh.
He looked like Kāla
as he circled the field,
like lord-of-gods Indra
circling the field,
when he battled Namuci.

SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 Witnessing the fight (said Sañjaya),
between the Kaurava heroes
gaining momentum, Arjuna said
to illustrious Vāsudeva-Krishna:

2 "Janārdana-Krishna!
Tell me:
Who of these two heroes
is the better
in battle?
Whose guṇas are superior?"

3 Vāsudeva-Krishna replied:
"Both received the same training;
Bhīma is stronger;
but Duryodhana has worked harder
and has more skill
than Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

4 Bhīma will never win
if he relies
on dharma in combat,
but by unfair means
he can kill
Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

5 I have heard the gods
used māyā in the past
to defeat the antigods,
that Śakra-Indra also
used māyā to defeat
the antigod Virocana.

6 Slayer-of-Bala Indra
used māyā to destroy
radiantly energetic Vṛtra.
Bhīma too
should strengthen his strength
with the help of māyā.

7 At the dice-game,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
remember: Bhīma vowed,
'I will smash
both the thighs
of Suyodhana-Duryodhana.'

8 Well, it's time foe-crushing Bhīma
kept his word,
and used māyā
against
the user of māyā –
rājā Duryodhana.

9 If he depends on strength alone
to win,
things are going
to become
very difficult
for rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

10 I tell you this again,
Pāṇḍava Arjuna.
Listen to me carefully.
It is Yudhiṣṭhira's fault
we are in such
great danger now.

11 What mahā-trouble he had
    to win the war –
Killing Bhīṣma
    and other Kauravas,
and getting back his own
    for the wrongs done him.

12 And now he is ready
    to put in peril
the victory he gained.
    O Pāṇḍava Arjuna!
It is māhā-foolish
    of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

13 To stake that victory
    on the result
of one warrior's winning or losing.
    Suyodhana-Duryodhana
is brave, he is skilful,
    he is single-minded.

14 There is an old śloka
    one hears of,
sung by Uśanas-Śukra,
    full of practical wisdom.
Listen to me.
    Here it is:

15 'If an enemy routed,
    an enemy fled,
returns to fight you,
    be filled with dread,
for his sole aim
    is to see you dead.'

16 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
    Believe me,
even Śakra-Indra
    is helpless
before a life-sacrificing
    fanatic martyr.

17 Suyodhana-Duryodhana's army
was wiped out.
Without hope of recovering
his kingdom,
he hides in a lake,
he wants to live in a forest . . .

18 What sane man would invite
such a desperate soul
to a mace-combat?
Let us pray
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
does not get back his kingdom!

19 For thirteen years
he has practised the subtleties
of mace-fight.
Look at the way
he's manoeuvring there,
hoping to kill Bhīma!

20 If mahā-muscled Bhīma
does not unfairly
kill him soon,
the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
will become rājā of the Kauravas –
including you."

21 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna listened
to the advice
of mahātmā Keśava-Krishna,
glanced sideways at Bhīma,
and tapped
his left thigh.

22 Bhīma got the message,
and the field of combat
saw him perform
intricate maṇḍala-manoeuvres,
including
the *yamaka*.

23 O rājā! What a variety
of bewildering maṇḍala-movements
on the field –
the *dakṣiṇā*-right,
the *savya*-left,
the *gomūtra*-cow-drip.

24 Your son too, master-of-the-mace
Duryodhana,
eager to kill Bhīma,
displayed any number
of swift
feet-dexterous manoeuvres.

25 Feinting, and whirling
their fierce
sandalpaste-and-*agaru*-
anointed maces,
both looked like personified
Antaka-Kālas.

26 The two bull-brave heroes
bent on mutual slaughter
looked
like two Garutmat-Garuḍas
elawing each other
over a nāga-serpent.

27 And as king Duryodhana and Bhīma
continued
their maṇḍala-manoeuvres,
their maces clashed
and flashing sparks
lit up the field.

28 O rājā!
Both brave warriors
leapt at each other
like the tossing billows
of two
storm-agitated oceans.

29 Both were well matched.
They were like
two battling elephants,
and the thud
of their maces
was like the crash of thunder.

30 But the time came when tiredness
took over
both these magnificent combatants,
both
fearful crushers
of their enemies.

31 O foe-scorcher!
They rested;
but very briefly.
Then, picking up
their massive maces,
they resumed the duel.

32 O Indra-among-rājās!
No holds were barred.
Wounded with blows
from their maces,
they gloried
in their aggression.

33 They fought on,
these two large-bull-eyed heroes;
on the field
they looked
like two battling buffaloes
mired in mud.

34 Mangled and bruised
their bodies,
and bathed in blood –
they looked
like two red-blossomed *kiṁśuka*-trees
in the Himālayas.

35 When Pārtha-Arjuna
gave the tapping hint,
Duryodhana glanced
in his direction,
and swiftly advanced
against Bhīma.

36 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
saw
Duryodhana advancing
towards him,
and Bhīma hurled his mace
at Duryodhana.

37 O lord of the world!
Seeing the mace
speeding towards him,
your son stepped aside,
and the mace fell
on the ground.

38 O finest of the Kauravas!
your son,
stepping aside,
eluded the mace attack,
but quickly retaliated
with his mace.

39 Illimitably energetic Bhīma,
struck by the mace,
started bleeding profusely.
So deeply wounded was he
that temporarily
he became unconscious.

40 Duryodhana was not aware
how seriously
he had wounded Bhīma,
because Bhīma,
despite the fierce blow,
kept his balance.

41 Duryodhana had the impression
stockstill Bhīma
was planning to attack him,
so, instead of pursuing his advantage,
he took up
a defensive stance.

42 O rājā! Stunned briefly,
valiant Bhīma
saw Duryodhana
in a defensive pose,
and unleashed on him
a furious attack.

43 O bull-brave Bharata!
Seeing illimitably
energetic Bhīma
about to attack,
your son readied himself
to repulse the onslaught.

44 O rājā! To trick Bhīma,
your mahā-minded son
pretended
that he would remain still;
then, suddenly, he acted
as if about to jump.

45 Bhīma guessed the mind
of rājā Duryodhana,
and he bounded
like a lion
to disadvantage
his opponent.

46 O rājā! Pāṇḍava Bhīma
guessed the footwork-manoeuvre
of his enemy
and, O rājā,
he swiftly hurled his mace
at Duryodhana's thigh.

[IX:58:47-52]

Transcreated by P.Lal

47 The mace
of fierce-and-fearful Bhīma
sped like a thunderbolt
and mangled
the lovely-to-look-at thighs
of Duryodhana.

48 O ruler of the earth!
His thighs
smashed by Bhīma,
your tiger-among-men son
Duryodhana
collapsed on the field.

49 Lightning flashed,
fierce winds blew
scattering dust,
the tree-forest-and-hill-ornamented
earth
trembled –

50 The lord-of-all-rulers brave
Duryodhana had fallen!
Fearful lightning flashed,
and mahā-noisy peals
of thunder
were heard,

51 And meteors streamed,
because the-lord-of-the earth
Duryodhana had fallen.
O Bharata descendant!
Torrential showers
of dust and blood

52 Were loosed on the earth
by Maghavat-Indra
because your son had fallen.
Yakṣas, rākṣasas,
and blood-sucking
piśācas,

53 O bull-brave Bharata,
raised a mahā-clamour
in the sky.
Along with that cacophony,
birds
and beasts

54 Screamed horrendously
deafening
all the ten directions.
And the surviving
horses, elephants
and men

55 Joined in a collective wail
to mourn
the fall of your son.
Bheri-drums,
conches and *mṛdaṅgas*
with a mahā-noise

56 Filled earth and sky
to mourn
the fall of your son.
O king!
Horrendous many-footed-and-armed headless
trunks materialised

57 And started dancing
in all the ten directions.
And all the warriors,
variously flagged,
and armed with weapons
and missiles,

58 Began trembling uncontrollably
to mourn, O rājā,
the fall of your son.
O finest of kings!
Lakes and wells started
bubbling with blood

59 And mahā-swift rivers
reversed the flow
of their currents.
And men became women,
and women
became men

60 When your son Duryodhana fell,
O rājā.
Seeing all this,
the Pāñcālas
and the Pāṇḍavas
became apprehensive,

61 And anxiety overcame them,
O bull-brave Bhrarata.
And the gods
and the gandharvas
and the apsarās
returned to their abodes,

62 Chanting the wonderful kathā
of your two sons
and singing their praises,
O Bharata descendant.
And the Siddhas
and air-coursing Vātikas
and the Cāraṇas,
O Indra-among-rājās,
also sang the praises
of the two cousin-brothers,
your sons.

SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 Seeing Duryodhana (said Sañjaya)
toppled like a mahā-śāla-tree
the Pāṇḍavas were delighted,
and approached him for a closer look.

2 And the Somakas too,
seeing the lion-felled,
musth-elephant-strong Duryodhana defeated,
exulted; their hair stood on end.

3 After striking him down,
valiant Bhīma
approached the helpless
Indra-among-Kauravas
Duryodhana,
and said to him:

4 "Ill-minded idiot!
You mocked me,
saying 'Cow! Cow!'
and laughed at single-garment-dressed
Draupadī in her period,
in the sabhā –

5 Enjoy now the fruits
of that insult!"
Saying this,
with his left foot
he kicked
at Duryodhana's crown,

6 And bruised the head
of the lion-like rājā
with his foot.
The crusher-of-hostile-armies
Bhīma,
his eyes red with anger –

7 The words he said, after that,
O lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
listen to them.
"The fools who danced
and mocked me,
saying 'Cow! Cow!' –

8 Let them see me dance today
and mock them, saying 'Cow! Cow!'
I don't cheat,
I don't burn homes, or gamble, or steal.
I silence my enemies
with the strength of my arms."

9 Ending in this way
the duel with maces,
wolf-waisted Bhīma
smiled slowly and said
to Keśava-Krishna,
Yudhiṣṭhira, the Sṛñjayas,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
and Mādrī's twin sons
Nakula and Sahadeva:

10 "Those who dragged Draupadī
in her period in the sabha,
and tried to disrobe her
in the presence of all --
they are the ones
laid low by the Pāṇḍavas
with the strength of the tapasyā
of Yājñasenī-Draupadī.
Let them see what they did!

11 All the cruel sons
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
who branded us impotent,
hollow like sesame seeds –
they, their relatives, and henchmen,
we have killed them all!
If this takes us to heaven,
or takes us to hell –
what do we care?"

12 With these words,
Bhīma approached rājā Duryodhana
who lay on the ground
and picked up the mace,
fallen near his shoulder.
Then, kicking the head
of Duryodhana with his foot,
he once again said:
"Cheat! Scoundrel!"

13 O rājā! It is true –
it was shabby of Bhīma
to kick the head
of that finest-of-Kauravas.
Those among the Somakas
who were dharmātmās
who saw this, were not happy at all,
and did not approve
this contemptible deed.

14 To wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
who was boasting and dancing
after striking down Duryodhana,
Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira said:

15 "Stop it! Enough of this!
Your debt is paid,
your revenge accomplished.
With fair means and foul,
you have kept your promise.

16 No more kicking his head!
O blameless one!
Do not transgress dharma.
He is a rājā,
our cousin-brother, helpless.
You do great wrong.

17 No more kicking!
He is a Kaurava rājā, Bhīma,
commander of eleven *akṣauhiṇis,*
our relative –
you must not touch him
with your foot.

18 His brothers are dead,
and his courtiers;
his army has been annihilated;
he is lying helpless.
He deserves sympathy,
not mockery.

19 Courtiers, brothers, sons –
all dead!
No one left to make
the *piṇḍa*-offering!
He is your brother –
don't wrong him now.

20 People used to say
Bhīma follows dharma.
Are you the same Bhīma
who busily kicks
rājā Duryodhana
with his left foot?"

21 Saying this to Bhīma,
Yudhiṣṭhira approached
foe-subduing Duryodhana
and, in a voice
choking with tears,
he said:

22 "*Tāta*! Dear brother!
Do not hate us,
do not pity yourself.
We must all
suffer the consequences
of our ill-deeds.

23 O finest-of-the-Kauravas!
Your harming us,
we harming you –
surely providence ordained this;
these are the fruits
of our past deeds.

24 O descendant of Bharata!
It was your fault,
your greed, your pride,
your obsession
that brought on your head
this mahā-calamity.

25 Your friends, brothers,
father-like elders,
sons and grandsons
have died because of you –
and you too
are now helpless.

26 That we, because of your fault,
have killed
your brothers and all
your other relatives –
I think this
is our inescapable fate.

27 O defectless one!
Don't pity yourself.
Your death will be praiseworthy.
O Kaurava!
It's we who
should be mourning;

28 We must pass our days now
without all
who were near and dear to us.
Our brothers
and our sons –
their grief-stricken,

29 Grief-desolated widows –
how will I be able
to look them in the face?
O rājā!
You alone are the happy one,
heaven truly is yours.

30 We will suffer a fearful hell
on earth.
We have earned the contempt
of the widows
of the sons and grandsons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

31 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
He finished.
He sighed heavily.
Loud and long
was the grief
of Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

SECTION SIXTY

1 "O Sūtā!" asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
"When he saw rājā Duryodhana
killed by adharma,
what did mahā-powerful
finest-of-the-Mādhavas
Baladeva-Balarāma say?

2 Sañjaya, tell me everything
he said and did –
the mace-magnificent, mace-combat-expert
Rohiṇī's son Balarāma."

3 Sañjaya replied: When he saw
Bhīma kicking
your son Duryodhana's head,
finest-of-warriors
powerful Balarāma
was livid with anger.

4 Lifting his arms in that assembly
of Indras-among-men,
plough-wielding Halāyudha-Balarāma
shouted:
"*Dhik*! *Dhik*! Bhīma!
Shame on you, Bhīma!

5 Aho! In all my life
I have never seen,
in a combat of maces
in a duel of dharma,
anyone hitting
below the navel.

6 The śāstras are clear on this:
no hitting below the navel.
But this fool
does not know
the śāstras.
He does what he likes."

7 Even as he said this,
his anger rose
to fever pitch.
With anger-inflamed eyes
he glanced
at rājā Duryodhana.

8 Mahārāja!
Baladeva-Balarāma said:
"Krishna!
Duryodhana is my equal
in mace-combat.
When he is unfairly humiliated

9 In a duel, I am insulted.
The shelter-giver is insulted
when the shelter-seeker's weakness
is exploited."
With his mace uplifted,
he raced towards Bhīma.

10 As he ran with upraised arms,
mahātmā Balarāma
looked like a pure-white
mahā-mountain
glittering with a wealth
of multi-coloured minerals.

11 Seeing plough-carrying
Haladhara-Balarāma
rushing to attack him,
Bhīma was not upset,
nor were weapons-expert Arjuna
and his other brothers.

12 It was Keśava-Krishna,
strong yet gentle,
who with his powerful
symmetrically muscular arms
held Balarāma
in check.

13 O Indra-among-rājās!
The two Yādava brothers,
one dark, the other fair,
shone like sun and moon at day-end,
like white Kailāsa
beside a black mountain.

14 To pacify him,
Keśava-Krishna said:
"One's own prosperity,
the prosperity of one's friends,
the prosperity
of one's friends' friends,

15 The decline of one's enemy,
of one's enemy's friend,
and one's enemy's friend's friend –
these are the six kinds
of success
one can have.

16 If the opposite happens –
you declining in all six ways,
your enemy prospering –
then one should act quickly
and save one's friends
from ruin.
The pure-minded Pāṇḍavas
are our natural friends –

17 Our own aunt's sons,
badly treated by their enemies.
I believe it is a Kṣatriya's dharma
to keep his word.

18 Bhīma vowed in the sabhā:
'This I promise:
When the mahā-war
takes place,
I will smash both the thighs
of Suyodhana-Duryodhana.'

19 O foe-crushing Balarāma!
And mahā-ṛṣi Maitreya
had cursed Duryodhana:
'Bhīma will smash
your thighs
with his mace.'

20 O destroyer of Pralamba!
Control your anger.
Bhīma has done no wrong.
We are blood-relatives of the Pāṇḍavas,
bonded to them
by joy-giving love.

21 O bull-brave hero!
Give up your anger.
Their good is our good."
Wise-in-dharma
plough-wielding Balarāma
said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:

22 “Good people cherish dharma,
but two things
get in the way of dharma.
Excessive greed for artha
and excessive pursuit of kāma
obstruct dharma.

23 Happy the man who does not spoil dharma
by excessive artha,
dharma by excessive kāma,
and kāma by excessive artha,
who balances all three:
dharma-artha-kāma.

24 O Govinda-Krishna!
Bhīma has transgressed dharma,
and created trouble for all.
You say what he has done is right.
But that
is only your opinion.”

25 Krishna said, “Calm yourself.
Control your anger.
Everyone respects you
as a dharmātmā,
one who is never angry,
who cherishes dharma.

26 Blame it on Kali-yuga!
Say it's already arrived.
Think:
Pāṇḍava Bhīma took a vow –
a vow he has fulfilled,
a debt he has discharged.

27 Tiger-among-men Bhīma
has killed
his wicked enemy.
The job is done.
There is no adharma
in this.

28 It was Duryodhana
who advised Karṇa
to steal up from behind
and shatter the bow
of Kuru-Vṛṣṇi-glory-enhancer
war-expert Abhimanyu.

29 And after shattering the bow,
he slaughtered
the uncharioted Abhimanyu,
Subhadrā's son,
a manly never-turning-his-back-in-the-field
warrior.

30 What Bhīma has done
is finish off
a family disgrace,
an evil-minded,
wicked-ātmaned
scoundrel from birth.

31 The vow of Bhīma
was a thirteen-year long vow
known
to everyone.
What made Duryodhana
forget that fact?

32 Bhīma was targeted for death
by swiftly leaping Duryodhana –
and that was
when Bhīma smashed his thighs –
he was not maṇḍala-manoeuvring
or stock-still."

33 O lord of the world!
(continued Sañjaya)
Displeased with the crooked dharma
of Keśava-Krishna,
Balarāma spoke out
to the assembly:

34

"By using adharma to kill
dharmātmā Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
Pāṇḍava Bhīma
has exposed himself
to the world
as a wily warrior.

35

Dhṛtarāṣṭra's dharmātmā son
rājā Duryodhana
died fighting a fair fight,
for which reason
he will attain
eternal felicity.

36

Receiving *dīkṣā*-initiation,
he prepared for war-yajña,
offered his life as oblation
in the ritual enemy-flames,
and completed the sacrifice
by attaining glory."

37

Saying this, Rohiṇī's illustrious son
Balarāma,
radiant like the front
of a pure-white cloud,
climbed into his chariot
and left for Dvārakā.

38

O lord of the world!
With Balarāma hurriedly
leaving for Dvārakā,
the Pāñcālas, Vṛṣṇis
and Pāṇḍavas
felt more than disappointed.

39

Most miserable of all
was Yudhiṣṭhira.
Face lowered, he kept brooding.
His heart was drowning in grief.
Vāsudeva-Krishna
said to him:

40 "Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
Why are you
allowing this adharma?
Duryodhana's brothers,
friends and allies are dead,
and he helpless.

41 And Bhīma, O ruler of men,
is trampling his head
underfoot!
And you, who are wise in dharma,
watch this,
and do nothing!"

42 "Krishna," replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"I do not like Vṛkodara-Bhīma
kicking
Duryodhana's head.
The destruction of our dynasty
has not pleased me.

43 But what can I do?
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
plotted against us,
they reviled us,
and forced us
into forest-exile.

44 O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
Bhīma nursed a deep grudge
in his heart.
Knowing this,
I looked
the other way.

45 So, I have decided,
let him kill the greedy,
kāma-obsessed Duryodhana
by dharma or adharma.
Let him do what he wants.
I do not care."

46 Vasudeva-Krishna listened
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
(continued Sañjaya)
and the finest of the Yādavas
said painfully,
"So be it then."

47 Hearing this from Vāsudeva-Krishna,
who always
loved Bhīma
and desired the welfare of Bhīma,
Yudhiṣṭhira gave his approval
to all that Bhīma did.

48 Mahā-muscled Arjuna also
was not happy
with his brother's deed,
but refrained
from saying
whether it was good or otherwise.

49 But wrathful Bhīma
brimmed over with joy,
and stood
before Yudhiṣṭhira
respectfully,
his palms joined in *añjali*.

50 O lord of the world!
Mahā-energetic Bhīma,
radiant
with the delight of victory,
said this
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira:

51 "Mahārāja!
This world
is yours now.
I have plucked out
its thorns.
It is once more
a glorious place.
Rule it,
and cherish it
with your sva-dharma.

52 O ruler
of the earth!
This man who loved
deceit and dishonesty,
this man who fomented
hate and bitterness –
he is dead,
he sleeps forever
on the bare earth.

53 All your other enemies
are dead too –
foul-mouthed Duḥśāsana,
and Karṇa, son of Rādhā,
and Śakuni,
and many more.

54 Not one enemy living,
mahārāja!
This bountiful
gem-and-forest-and-hill-covered
earth
is now all yours!"

55 "The war is over,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana
is dead,
and with Krishna's approval
the world is now ours.

56 Our good fortune you have repaid
your debt to your mother
and to your wrath. Good fortune,
O formidable one,
that you have won,
good fortune you have killed your enemy."

SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 "With Duryodhana struck down
by Bhīma
in the mace-duel, Sañjaya,"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"what did the Pāṇḍavas
and Sṛñjayas do?"

2 Seeing Bhīma
fatally mauling Duryodhana
like a lion, mahārāja,
killing a musth elephant (said Sañjaya),

3 Krishna and the Pāṇḍavas
were overjoyed.
Seeing that Kaurava descendant
fatally wounded,
the Pāñcālas
and Sṛñjayas

4 Tossed their upper garments
in the air
and roared like lions.
The earth shook
under the heavy burden
of those boasting warriors.

5 Some stretched their bows,
some twanged
their bow strings,
some sounded conches,
some beat
dundubhi-drums.

6 They had such fun,
your enemies,
as if they were playing games.
Some, in fact,
approached heroic Bhīma
and said to him:

7 "What a superb defence
that Indra-of-the-Kauravas put up!
By killing him
in the mace-fight,
you have achieved a difficult,
mahā-splendid feat!

8 Just like the slaughter
of Vṛtra by Indra
in that incredible battle –
exactly like that
you finished off your enemy!"
So everyone said.

9 That Duryodhana –
such maṇḍala-manoeuvrings,
such skilful footwork! –
who else but brave
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
could have finished him off?

10 You have calmed
the raging ocean of war –
which is so difficult to do!
Absolutely impossible
for anyone else
to do what you did!

11 What marvellous good fortune,
O hero,
that you, like a musth elephant,
kicked and crushed
the head of Duryodhana
under your foot!

12 O defectless one!
What marvellous good fortune
that you drank
the blood of Duḥśāsana,
like a lion lapping
the blood of a buffalo!

13 What marvellous good fortune
that you have trampled
the heads
of all the scoundrels
who dared to insult
Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira!

14 What marvellous good fortune,
Bhīma, that your fame
has spread far and wide
because you have subjugated
your enemies
and killed Duryodhana!

15 O Bharata descendant!
Like the praise-chanters
who eulogised Indra
for killing Vṛtra,
we sing your praises
for killing our enemies.

16 O descendant of Bharata!
Look!
Look at our body hair
still standing on end,
horripilating when we saw you
strike down Duryodhana."

17 These words were spoken
by the eulogists of Bhīma.
When he realised
that the tiger-brave Pāñcālas
as well as
the Pāṇḍavas

18 Were exceeding
the limits of adulation,
Madhusūdana-Krishna said:
"It is not right to indulge,
O rulers of men,
in over-kill.

19 Wicked he was, your enemy,
but why kill him again,
with cruel words?
Evil Duryodhana
died long ago,
when he succumbed

20 To greed,
and spurned the advice
of his well-wishing friends.
Time after time,
Vidura, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Gaṅga's son Bhīṣma, and the Sṛñjayas

21 Urged him to give the Pāṇḍavas
their share of the kingdom,
and he refused.
This scoundrel
is no good now –
no one's friend, no one's enemy.

22 O lords of the earth!
What do you gain
by mocking this stump
of lifeless wood?
Let's climb into our chariots
and leave this place.

23 Enough good fortune for us –
this scoundrel, his friends and advisers
are all no more."
Hearing these insulting words
of Krishna,
king Duryodhana,

24 Roused to wrathful fury,
actually tried rising to his feet,
but he could not.
Placing both hands on the ground,
he slumped back
on his haunches.

25 Contracting his eyebrows,
he glared
at Vāsudeva-Krishna.
Crouching
in that half-raised
awkward posture,

26 He looked
like an angry venomous snake
with its tail sliced in half.
O Bharata descendant!
He was in excruciating pain,
on the verge of death,

27 Yet he attacked
Vāsudeva-Krishna
with these fierce and bitter words:
"You son
of a slave of Kaṁsa!
Are you not ashamed

28 I was struck down
by adharma
in the mace-combat?
When you slyly
suggested to Bhīma
to smash my thighs –

29 Using Arjuna
as your go-between –
do you think you fooled me?
You kill thousands
of clean-fighting
lords of the earth

30 With all kinds of trickery –
and you feel
no shame, no disgust?
When he was daily
busy with his mahā-massacre
of brave enemies,

31 You used Śikhaṇḍin
as a convenient shield
to kill Pitāmaha Bhīṣma.
Wicked-minded wretch!
Naming an elephant Aśvatthāman
and slaughtering him

32 So that ācārya Droṇa
lays down his weapons –
do you think you fooled me?
And as a result,
when valiant Droṇa,
by cruel Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

33 Was killed in front of your eyes,
you did nothing,
nothing at all to stop him.
And the śakti-missile
that was obtained by Karṇa
to kill Pāṇḍava Arjuna –

34 You diverted it,
to kill Ghaṭotkaca instead!
None as wicked as you!
His arm cut off,
brave Bhūriśravas was deep
in his vow of fasting –

35 And you inspired Śini's mahatmā
grandson Sātyaki
to conveniently kill him then!
When brilliant Karṇa
was on the point of defeating
Pārtha-Arjuna

36 With the help
  of the Indra-among-*pannaga*-snakes
Aśvasena,
  you tricked him and frustrated his plan.
Again, when Karṇa's stuck chariot-wheel
  made him vulnerable,

37 All of you joined hands
  and killed him
on the battlefield.
  If I and Karṇa,
and Bhīṣma
  and Droṇa

38 Were fought fairly,
  you could never
have defeated us.
  But you used un-āryan
and crooked means,
  and we earth-lords,

39 Fighting as our sva-dharma
  inspired us to fight,
became your victims."
  Vasudeva-Krishna said:
"Gāndhārī's son,
  you, your brothers, sons, relatives,

40 Friends and followers have fallen
  because you chose
the path of wickedness.
  Bhīṣma and Droṇa
are dead
  because of your wickedness.

41 Karṇa is dead
  because he freely chose
to be like one of you.
  You fool!
Despite my request,
  you refused the rightful share

42 Of the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas,
because you were greedy,
and preferred Śakuni's advice.
You tried
to poison Bhīma,
and the Pāṇḍavas

43 And their mother, you scoundrel,
whom you nearly burnt to death
in the lacquer-house;
and you dragged
Yājñasenī-Draupadī in her period
in the packed sabhā.

44 You wicked-ātmaned wretch!
All this makes you
a fit candidate for death.
You got cunning-in-dice Subala's son Śakuni
to play with
dharma-knowing innocent-in-dice

45 Yudhiṣṭhira, and cheat him
into losing.
You deserve to die!
The trauma that Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
suffered at the hands
of Jayadratha in the forest,

46 In Tṛṇabinda ashram
when the Pāṇḍavas
were away hunting;
and so many of you,
surrounding Abhimanyu
who was all alone,

47 And slaughtering him –
for these, you evil scoundrel,
you deserve death.
Nothing wrong with Śikhaṇḍin
killing Bhīṣma to save his Pāṇḍava allies
from Bhīṣma.

48 And ācārya Droṇa violated
his sva-dharma
by following the wicked
and unjust,
so he was killed
by Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna

49 And the learned Sātvata Sātyaki
was only keeping true
to his vow
when he killed
the mahā-chariot-hero
Bhūriśravas.

50 O rājā! On the battlefield,
never has
tiger-among-men Arjuna
been guilty
of anything dishonourable
and condemnable.

51 Ill-minded wretch!
In spite of all
the opportunities he had,
Arjuna never used them
to kill Karṇa.
So don't revile him.

52 Respecting the wishes of the gods,
and for their sake
I frustrated
the Mahā-nagā missile
that was directed
at Arjuna.

53 And only because Arjua refrained
from violence
were you, Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman and Kṛpa
able to escape death
in Virāṭa's capital.

54 Recall Pārtha-Arjuna's valour
against the gandharvas at that time!
Who can say
that the behaviour
of the Pāṇḍavas was motivated
by adharma?

55 The mahā-muscled foe-crushing Pāṇḍavas
have abided by sva-dharma,
and won the war.
Your evil caused your downfall.
And all the wrongs
that you say we are guilty of –

56 They are all the results
of the wickedness
which you perpetrated.
You have not respected
the advice of Bṛhaspati
and Uśanas-Śukra.

57 You have not listened
to the beneficial words
of your elders.
Obsessed by greed,
and gripped
by insatiable desire,

58 You have done
what should not be done –
and you must now pay the price."
Duryodhana replied:
"I have studied, given gifts,
ruled the sea-girt earth,

59 Placed my foot on the heads
of my enemies.
Who has done as much?
The fulfilment
desired by Kṣatriyas
who follow their sva-dharma –

60 That fulfilling death
is mine today.
Who is there more fortunate than me?
What gods enjoy,
what kings find hard to get,
those human pleasures

61 I have enjoyed.
I have achieved the peak of power.
Who is there more fortunate than me?
O Acyuta-Krishna,
I go to heaven
with my friends and followers,

62 And all of you stay back here
with grieving minds
and shattered hearts.
It matters little to me
that Bhīma has placed his foot
on my head,

63 For very soon now,
crows, *kaṅka*-kites and vultures
will do the same."
Sañjaya continued:
The moment wise Kaurava-rājā
Duryodhana finished,

64 A shower of fragrant flowers
fell auspiciously
on his head.
Gandharvas played
exquisite melodies
on their instruments,

65 And apsarās sang songs
in praise of the glory
of rājā Duryodhana,
and, O earth-lord,
the Siddhas exclaimed:
"*Sādhu! Sādhu!* Excellent!"

66 And a soft-scented, soothing breeze
began blowing.
And all the directions
were a blaze of light.
And the sky was a dazzle
of lapis lazuli.

67 Vāsudeva-Krishna and the others
stood there, ashamed,
with these wonders unfolding
in front of their eyes,
this pūjā in honour
of rājā Duryodhana.

68 And remorse touched the hearts
of all the spectators
when they heard how adharma
had been used
to kill Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa
and Bhūriśravas.

69 Seeing the Pāṇḍavas dispirited
and lost in thought,
Krishna, in a voice
that boomed like a cloud
or a *dundubhi*-drum,
said:

70 "Duryodhana
was a brilliantly swift wielder
of war-weapons.
So were all those mahā-chariot-heroes.
You could never have routed them
in a fair fight.

71 No amount of dharma
could have killed
king Duryodhana
and Bhīṣma
and the other mahā-bowmen
and mahā-chariot-heroes.

72 I had your welfare in mind,
which is why
I used māyā again and again
on the field of battle
in order
to get rid of them.

73 If I had not gone in
for a bit of deceit,
how would you
have gained victory,
recovered your kingdom
and become rich?

74 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Bhūriśravas –
these four
were great chariot-heroes,
mahātmās all four.
Even the Lokapālas
could not have defeated them with dharma.

75 As for the mace-wielding son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Duryodhana –
he simply never tired.
By using dharma alone,
even rod-wielding Kāla
could not have killed him.

76 So clear your mind
of any regrets
about how they were killed.
A super-powerful enemy
deserves to be killed
by all kinds of deceit.

77 The gods employed deceit
in the past
when they wiped out the antigods.
Everyone follows
the example
set by the good and the great.

78 Our work is done.
It is now evening.
O kings!
Let us now rest.
Let's retire with our horses,
elephants and chariots."

79 These words of Vāsudeva-Krishna
revived the spirits
of the Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas,
and they broke
into joyful peals
of lion-roaring acclamation.

80 O bull-brave Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Seeing Duryodhana laid low,
Mādhava-Krishna
blew his conch the Pāñcajanya,
and the others
blew their own conches.

81 Arjuna joyfully blew
his conch the Devadatta;
Kuntī's son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
his conch
called the Anantavijaya;

82 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
blew his mahā-conch the Pauṇḍra;
Nakula
the Sughoṣa,
and Sahadeva
the Puṣpaka.

83 O bull-brave Bharata!
The Jaitra conch
was blown by Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
and Nandivardhana
by Sātyaki.
The mahā-peals of those conches.

84 Vibrated in the sky
and shook the earth.
Conches,
paṇava-drums,
anaka-drums,
and *gomukha*-horns

85 Blared forth
from the assembly
of Pāṇḍava warriors.
The noise was tumultuous.
And many others
who were there
sang auspicious praises
glorifying the Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 The earth-lords with mace-thick arms
(said Sañjaya), blowing their conches,
happily returned
to their respective camps.

2 O lord of the world Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Following the Pāṇḍavas to our camps
were mahā-bowman
Yuyutsu, Sātyaki,

3 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin,
all the sons
of Draupadī;
and many more
expert mahā-archers
forming that assembly.

4 The sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī entered
the tent of its dead lord Duryodhana,
a theatre
deserted by its audience,
a tent shorn
of its splendour,

5 A pavilion that looked
like a depopulated city,
where only women, eunuchs and the elderly
move about,
a city without festivities,
a lake without elephants,

6 A place, O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
where, now,
the retainers of Duryodhana,
in soiled yellow dresses,
stood before the Pāṇḍavas,
palms folded in *añjali.*

7 Mahārāja! The Pāṇḍavas,
excellent chariot-heroes all of them,
halted their chariots
at the tent
of the Kaurava rājā,
and dismounted.

8 O bull-brave Bharata!
Always eager
to help his dear friend,
Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna,
Keśava-Krishna
said to him:

9 "O finest of the Bharatas!
Put aside
your Gāṇḍīva-bow
and both your inexhaustible quivers.
Dismount from your chariot;
then I will also.

10 Do this, O defectless one.
I am saying this
for your own good."
Pāṇḍu's valiant son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
did as advised.

11 Then vastly wise Krishna
released the reins
of the chariot-horses,
and stepped out of the vehicle,
following
the Gāṇḍīva-wielder.

12 Lord-of-all-creatures
supreme mahātmā Krishna stepped down;
and as he did so,
the celestial ape
in the war-flag of the Gāṇḍīva-wielder
disappeared into thin air.

13 O ruler of the earth!
And the mahā-chariot of Arjuna,
scorched
by the missiles
of Droṇa and Karṇa,
burst into flames.

14 The Gāṇḍīva-wielder's chariot –
all of it –
its yokes, reins, shafts,
and horses –
everything –
turned into a heap of ashes.

15 *Prabhu*! Lord! O rājā!
Seeing the chariot
go up in flames,
all the Pāṇḍavas
were mystified,
and Arjuna said,

16 Folding his palms in *añjali*,
and *praṇāma-ing* Krishna
again and again:
"Govinda-Krishna!
Bhagavan! Revered one!
How did this happen?

17 O Yādava descendant!
A chariot exploding!
A mahā-incredible spectacle!
O mahā-muscled one!
If you think me worthy,
explain this to me."

18 Vāsudeva-Krishna replied:
"O foe-destroyer!
Weapons and missiles
ignited this chariot much earlier,
but it did not disintegrate
because I was in it.

19 Your mission is accomplished,
and I am no more in it.
So, this chariot,
already the fatal target
of the incandescent Brahmā-missile,
just broke into pieces."

20 Then Bhagavān Keśava-Krishna,
the destroyer of enemies,
smiling gently,
affectionately embraced
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and said to him:

21 "Son of Kuntī! How fortunate
that you have won
and your enemies are destroyed.
How fortunate
that Gāṇḍīva-wielder Arjuna,
Pāṇḍava Bhīma,

22 You, O rājā,
and Mādrī and Pāṇḍu's twin sons
have all survived
the hero-exterminating war,
and that all your enemies
are no more.

23 Now, O Bharata descendant,
you must do
what needs to be done.
When I came
with Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna
to Upaplavya,

24 You offered me *madhu-parka*
curd-ghee-water-and-honey,
and you said to me: 'Krishna!
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
is your brother
and your loved-and-loving-*sakhā*-friend.

25 O mahā-muscled one!
Prabhu! Lord!
Protect him at all times.'
O lord of men!
You asked me, and I replied,
'*Tatheti*! So be it.'

26 O Indra-among-rājās!
I have helped
to bring victory
to brave, firm-in-truth
ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
and his brothers.

27 They have emerged unharmed
from that foe-exterminating war
after destroying
their enemies."
These words of Krishna
made Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

28 Horripilate with delight.
Mahārāja!
He said to Janārdana-Krishna:
"Foe-crushing Krishna!
The Brahmā-missile
released by Droṇa and Karṇa –

29 No one but you
could have repulsed it,
not even city-destroying,
thunderbolt-wielding Indra.
The Saṁśapatakas were wiped out
by your grace,

30 And it was your blessing
that made Pārtha-Arjuna
never turn his back in battle.
O mahā-muscled one!
It was all
because of you

31 All our efforts succeeded,
and we gained
in energy and auspiciousness.
In Upaplavya,
mahā-ṛṣi Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
said to me:

32 'Where dharma is, Krishna is;
where Krishna is, victory is.' "
Saying this,
O Bharata descendant,
the brave Pāṇḍavas
entered the camps,

33 And appropriated the treasury,
the precious gems,
and hoards of other wealth,
including silver
and gold
and diamonds and pearls,

34 Blankets and carpets,
countless ornaments,
and deerskins,
male slaves and slave-girls,
and a variety
of other royal paraphernalia.

35 O best of the Bharatas!
O Indra-among-men!
Appropriating the inexhaustible riches
of your treasury,
the mahā-fortune-favoured Pāṇḍavas
shouted joyfully.

36 Then, unyoking their horses,
they rested briefly.
At that time,
the valiant Pāṇḍavas
and Sātyaki
were there together.

37 Mahārāja!
Mahā-renowned Vāsudeva-Krishna
said to them: "We should sleep
outside the camp
on this auspicious
first night."

38 Saying, "We will do so,"
the Pāṇḍavas and Sātyaki,
accompanied
by Vāsudeva-Krishna,
for their auspicious welfare
stepped outside the camp.

39 O king! That night,
the Pāṇḍavas,
who had no more enemies,
decided to rest
on the bank
of the sacred Oghavatī river.

40 Reflecting on what was right to do
at that time,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"Mādhava-Krishna!
I think this is the right time
for you to go

41 And console Gāndhārī
who is flaming with anger,
O destroyer of foes.
By speaking reasonably to her,
which
is so necessary now,

42 O mahā-fortune-favoured one,
I am sure
you can pacify Gāndhārī.
Our grandfather
Bhagavan Pitāmaha Vyāsa
will also be there."

43 They requested
finest-of-the-Yādavas Vāsudeva-Krishna
to proceed
to Hastināpura.
Climbing into the chariot,
widely-renowned

44 Krishna, driven by Dāruka,
swiftly went to meet
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
To Krishna, whose chariot-horses
are Śaibya and Śugriva,
the Pāṇḍava said again:

45 "Illustrious Gāndhārī's son
is dead.
Please console her."
Accompanied by these words
of the Pāṇḍavas,
finest-of-the-Sātvatas Krishna
drove to the capital
to meet Gāndhārī,
whose son was dead.

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 "O tiger-brave twice-born!"
said Janamejaya.
"What was the reason
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
sent foe-crushing Vāsudeva-Krishna
to Gāndhārī?

2 Krishna had gone earlier
to the Kauravas
with peace proposals,
and he had failed,
which was why
the war began.

3 All the warriors dead,
Duryodhana also dead,
the entire world
rid of all
the enemies
of the Pāṇḍavas,

4 The Kauravas fleeing,
their camps empty,
the Pāṇḍavas
at the height of their glory –
so why, O Brahmin,
was Krishna sent to Hastināpura?

5 It seems to me, Brahmin,
no small reason
made crusher-of-people
Janārdana-Krishna
hurry all that way
to the capital.

6 O finest of *adhvaryu*-priests!
O Brahmin!
I would like to know
in every detail
the reason
for this important journey."

7 O bull-brave Bharata earth-lord!
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
A very relevant question,
the one you ask.
I will tell you everything
exactly as it happened.

8 O rājā! In the mace-duel,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
mahā-powerful Duryodhana
was struck down unfairly
by Bhīma.
Seeing,

9 O Bharata mahārāja,
this unjust assault
contrary to the rules
of mace-combat,
Yudhiṣṭhira's mind was filled
with mahā-fear.

10 He thought of Gāndhārī,
the mahā-fortune-favoured lady
of great tapasyā.
He thought:
She can, if she likes, burn the three worlds
with the power of her tapasyā.

11 He reasoned to himself
that the best course
in the circumstances
was to first pacify
the anger-inflamed heart
of Gāndhārī –

12 Because if she finds out
the manner in which
we killed her son,
she will use her wrath
to incinerate
all of us.

13 After all, her son was fighting fairly;
we tricked him,
and killed him.
He will she ever be able
to tolerate
this agonising truth?

14 With fear and grief
overpowering him,
assailed by a multitude
of misgivings,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:

15 "Govinda-Krishna!
Acyuta-Krishna!
With your grace,
we have accomplished the unthinkable --
we are lords
of this thorn-free kingdom.

16 O mahā-muscled one!
O delighter of the Yādavas!
In front of our eyes,
you destroyed
all our enemies
in this horripilating war.

17 Long ago, in the clash
between the gods
and the antigods,
you sided with the gods
and exterminated
all their enemies.

18 O Acyuta-Krishna!
O mahā-powerful one!
O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
Similarly, as a charioteer,
you became our saviour
in this great war.

19 If you had not helped
Phālguna-Arjuna
in this mahā-war,
he could never have overcome
the oceanic army
of our enemies.

20 Many assaults from maces,
parigha-spiked-iron-clubs,
bhindipāla-slicers,
śakti-spears,
tomara-lances,
and *paraśu*-hatchets

21 Have you suffered, Krishna,
for our sake,
swallowed many insults,
endured the fury
of weapons as deadly
as the thunderbolt.

22 Undecaying Acyuta-Krishna!
Duryodhana's death
has made all that worthwhile.
Do something now
that will keep it that way –
and not make it worthless.

23 Mādhava-Krishna!
O mahā-muscled one!
Yes, victory is ours,
but one worry haunts me.
Please do something
about Gāndhārī's anger.

24 Terrifying is the tapasyā
with which
she has emaciated herself.
She will burn us to ashes
when she learns
of the deaths of her sons and grandsons.

25 O heroic Krishna!
Now is the time
to pacify her.
To face tapasyā-emaciated,
eyes-flaming-with-anger
Gāndhārī –

26 To look her in the eyes –
who can do that
but you, O Puruṣottama-Krishna!
It is essential
that you go there,
O Mādhava-Krishna,

27 O crusher of foes,
and allay the heart
of blazing-with-wrath Gāndhārī.
You are
the Creator and Destroyer
of the three worlds.

28 O mahā-muscled one!
You are the first cause
and the final end.
Calm Gāndhārī's rage
with the voice of reason
that seeks her welfare.

29 O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Our grandfather
Bhagavan Vyāsa
will also be there.
You must extinguish
the wrath of Gāndhārī,

30 O superlative Sātvata,
because you are a wellwisher
of the Pāṇḍavas."
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's words
made the glorious
Yādava Krishna turn

31 To Dāruka and say,
"Ready my chariot."
Ordered
by Keśava-Krishna,
Dāruka quickly
made ready the chariot,

32 And informed mahātmā
Keśava-Krishna.
Finest-of-the-Yādavas
foe-destroying Krishna
climbed
into the chariot.

33 Lord Keśava-Krishna
speedily drove
to the capital Hastināpura.
Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Bhagavān Mādhava-Krishna
in no time

34 Reached the precincts
of the Elephant City,
and entered its gates.
Chariot-wheels thundering,
the valiant hero
drove into the capital.

35 Announcing his arrival
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and alighting from his chariot,
he confidently
entered the palace
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

36 He noticed the finest-of-ṛṣis Vyāsa
had arrived
ahead of him.
Touching the feet of Kṛṣṇā-Vyāsa
and rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Janārdana-Krishna

37 Approached Gāndhārī;
then, Keśava-Krishna
prostrated himself before her.
Universe-overlord Adhokṣaja-Krishna,
superlative Yādava,
took Dhṛtarāṣṭra's

38 Hand in his, and then,
O Indra-among-rājās,
he burst into tears,
loud and long.
After a while,
washing his eyes with clean water,

39 Performing *acamana*
by rinsing his mouth,
foe-crushing Krishna,
speaking gently,
said these words
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

40 "O Bharata descendant!
Prabhu! Lord!
You are old and venerable.
What has happened, you know –
and what will happen.
You know all about Kāla.

41 O descendant of Bharata!
The Pāṇḍavas
have always respected your wishes.
They did their utmost
to prevent the destruction
of the Kṣatriyas.

42 Yudhiṣṭhira, who cherishes dharma,
and his brothers
willingly accepted a life of hardship,
going into forest-exile
after being cheated
in the dice-game.

43 In various diguises they survived
 the humiliation
of living unrecognised.
 That apart,
they endured other miseries,
 because they were helpless.

44 When war was imminent,
 I personally
came to you
 with an offer of peace,
asking for just
 five villages.

45 But Kāla decreed otherwise.
 You were greedy,
and you rejected my terms.
 O king!
That mistake was the cause
 of the Kṣatriya-carnage.

46 Bhīṣma and Somadatta,
 Bāhlīka and Kṛpa,
Droṇa
 and his son Aśvatthāman,
wise Vidura –
 all of them

47 Advised you to make peace,
 and you turned down
all of them.
 O descendant of Bharata!
When Kāla decrees it so,
 people get confused –

48 As you became confused
 when war was imminent.
What else is this
 but Kāla-yoga?
Inevitable
 are the workings of destiny.

49 O mahā-learned one!
Do not find fault
with the Pāṇḍavas.
The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
cannot be blamed
if the correct standards

50 Of dharma, justice, and affection
are employed.
O foe-crushing monarch!
You are responsible
for all these fruits of your acts.
Face this fact,

51 And do not transfer the blame
on the sons of Pāṇḍu.
On them now depend
the *piṇḍa* offerings given by children
to the spirits
of departed family and dynasty.

52 O lordly one!
You and Gāndhārī
depend now on the Pāṇḍavas.
O tiger-brave Kaurava!
You
and illustrious Gāndhārī

53 Should not nurse malice
in your hearts against them,
O tiger-among-men!
Take my words seriously,
and look also
at your own misdeeds,

54 And think well of the Pāṇḍavas,
O bull-brave Bharata.
Namaste. I namaskāra you!
O mahā-muscled one!
You know
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

55 Has deep bhakti for you,
and cherishes
the sincerest affection for you.
He has killed the enemies
who wronged him,
O tiger-brave Bharata,

56 But day and night
he burns with remorse,
he has no peace of mind.
O tiger-brave king!
For you
and illustrious Gāndhārī,

57 That tiger-brave hero
feels the deepest grief –
no peace, no peace at all for him!
So ashamed is he
that he that will not
even come to you,

58 Because he knows your grief
for your sons
has numbed your mind and senses."
O mahārāja Janamejaya!
Saying this to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
finest-of-the-Yādavas

59 Krishna said these excellent words
to Gāndhārī
who was emaciated with grief:
"Daughter of Subala!
Listen carefully
to what I have to say to you.

60 Auspicious lady!
No woman in the world
is your equal.
Rānī, remember that day
in the sabhā when,
in front of me,

61 You spoke such lovely words
of dharma and artha,
for the welfare of both partices?
Gracious and graceful lady!
Your sons rejected
your advice.

62 To Duryodhana
who was thirsting for victory,
you said harshly:
'You fool!
Victory is
where dharma is.'

63 O gracious and graceful
daughter of a king!
What you said then,
is proved true today.
Which is why
you should not grieve.

64 You must never let ruin
for the Pāṇḍavas
cross your mind.
O mahā-fortune-favoured lady!
This earth's moving and unmoving life,
with the shakti

65 Of your wrath-radiant eyes,
empowered by your tapasyā,
can be reduced to ashes."
To these words
of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Gāndhārī replied:

66 "Mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna!
There is truth
in every single word of yours.
The fire of grief
consumed my ability
to think clearly,

67 But after listening to you,
O punisher-of people Janārdana-Krishna,
Keśava-Krishna,
I am stable again.
The rājā is old and blind,
all his sons are dead.

68 You and the Pāṇḍavas
are the only ones left
to solace and shelter him."
With these words,
Gāndhārī covered her face
with her dress,

69 And agonising over the deaths
of her sons,
she broke into tears.
That grief-traumatised lady,
by mahā-muscled
Keśava-Krishna,

70 Was consoled and counselled
with a variety of reasons
and explanations and examples.
After Mādhava-Krishna
had solaced Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Gāndhārī,

71 He intuited the fearful plan
that lurked in the mind
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.
He rose, and,
touching with his head the feet
and thus *praṇāma-ing*

72 Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa, he turned,
O Indra-among-rājās,
to Kaurava-rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and said: "Grant me leave to go.
And do not grieve,
O finest of the Kauravas.

73 There is evil in the mind
of Droṇa's son.
That is why I must leave.
He is planning
to murder the Pāṇḍavas
tonight."

74 Hearing this, both Gāndhārī
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra
the mahā-muscled monarch
said to the slayer-of-Keśi
Keśisūdana
Keśava-Krishna:

75 "O mahā-muscled one!
Go immediately,
and save the Pāṇḍavas.
Janārdana-Krishna!
Go!
We will see you soon."

76 Unfading-in-glory
Acyuta-Vāsudeva-Krishna
left immediately with Dāruka.
In his absence,
O rājā Janemajaya,
lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra

77 Was given consolation
by world-namaskāra-ed Vyāsa
of immeasureably compassionate ātman.
And dharmātmā
Vāsudeva-Krishna,
his mission accomplished,

78 Left Hastināpura, O king,
and drove
to the camp of the Pāṇḍavas.
Arriving there
that very night,
he met the Pāṇḍavas,
reported all
that had taken place,
cautioned them,
and stayed near them.

SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 "Tell me, Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"thighs smashed,
head trampled by Bhīma's foot,
what did my proud son say?

2 Rājā Duryodhana was given to anger,
and he hated the Pāṇḍavas.
Caught in that calamity,
tell me, what did he say?"

3 O rājā! Lord of men!
(replied Sañjaya)
Listen to me while I narrate
what broken-thighed
rājā Duryodhana
said in that pitiable condition.

4 O rājā! His thighs smashed,
king Duryodhana
fell on the ground.
Smeared with dust,
he smoothed his hair,
and looked around him.

5 Doing his dishevelled hair
with great effort,
breathing
like a hissing snake,
eyes flowing with tears,
he looked at me.

6 Painfully steadying himself
on his arms,
he looked like a musth elephant.
Crouching,
shaking his stray locks of hair,
gnashing his teeth,

7 He began vilifying
the eldest Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.
Sighing heavily, he said to me:
"Śāntanu's son
Bhīṣma,
finest-of-weapons-wielders Karṇa,

8 Gautama's son Kṛpa, Śakuni,
finest-of-weapons-wielders
Droṇa,
and Aśvatthāman
and brave Śalya
and Kṛtavarman

9 Were all on my side –
yet look at my plight!
Kāla is all-powerful.
Once I was
the commander-in-chief
of eleven *akṣauhiṇīs,*

10 O mahā-muscled Sañjaya,
and look at me now!
Who can argue with Kāla?
All those from my ranks
who have survived
this war –

11 Be sure you tell them
how Bhīma tricked me
in the mace-combat.
The Pāṇḍavas
are guilty of outrageous
and unfair violence

12 Against Bhūriśravas, Karṇa,
Bhīṣma,
and noble-minded Śrīmān Droṇa.
And this is another
infamous crime
of the cruel Pāṇḍavas,

13 For which they will be condemned
by all good men.
At least, I think so.
How does it profit
a good man
to win by wicked means?

14 Who calls himself a paṇḍit
after busily
wallowing in adharma?
I see Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma
doing just that –
and enjoying doing it!

15 Can you ever see
a more incredible sight
than this –
I helpless with broken thighs,
and wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma,

16 Wild with rage,
stomping his left foot
on my head?
Radiant with discipline,
blessed by Śrī the goddess of prosperity,
respected by friends –

[IX:64:17-22]

Transcreated by P. Lal

17 To treat such an enemy fairly,
 Sañjaya,
is to deserve pūjā-respect
 for oneself.
My mother and father know
 the dharma of warfare.

18 My death will leave them desolated,
 Sañjaya.
Tell them I performed all rituals,
 pleased my servants,
and ruled creditably
 this sea-girdled earth,

19 And placed my foot, Sañjaya,
 only on the heads
of living, fighting-fit enemies.
 When charity was needed,
I gave in full.
 I pleased my friends.

20 Who in the world has faced
 his end
more honourably than I?
 I have given
the fullest pūjā-respect
 to friends and relatives.

21 I have assiduously served
 the three-fold ideal
of dharma-artha-kāma.
 What person in the world
has faced his end
 more honourably than I?

22 I have subjugated powerful kings,
 attained
hard-to-achieve fame,
 ridden Ājaneya horses,
attacked kingdoms,
 and reduced their rulers to slaves,

23 And pleased those whom I loved.
What person in the world
has faced his end
more honourably than I?
I have studied the Vedas,
given in charity, enjoyed good health,

24 Followed my sva-dharma, attained heaven.
What person in the world
has faced his end
more honourably than I?
Luckily, never defeated in battle,
I have never had to serve others.

25 How fortunate I am –
only after my death
has the goddess of prosperity Lakṣmī
left me and gone to another.
The death desired by my sva-dharma –
following Kṣatriya-friends –

26 That is also my death today.
What person in the world
has faced his end
more honourably than I?
What joy it is for me
I never turned my back in battle,

27 Never gave up fighting,
or gained victory
even after using unfair means.
I never killed
a sleeping or demented enemy,
never poisoned anyone –

28 Which is what Bhīma has done
by fighting unfairly
in the duel with maces.
Mahā-fortune-favoured
Aśvatthāman,
and the Sātvata Kṛtavarman,

29 Śaradvat's son Kṛpa –
repeat to them
these words I have spoken.
The Pāṇḍavas –
tell them this –
have again and again violated dharma;

30 You must never trust them,
never, none of you."
After this,
your valiant-in-truth son
Duryodhana
instructed the messengers:

31 "Bhīma killed me
in the mace-duel
by using adharma.
Now, to the heaven of Droṇa,
Karṇa,
Śalya,

32 Mahā-valiant Vṛṣasena,
Subala's son
Śakuni,
mahā-powerful
Jalasaṁdha,
king Bhagadatta,

33 The mahā-bowman
Somadatta,
the Sindhu ruler
Jayadratha,
Duḥśāsana
and my other kinsmen,

34 The valiant son
of Duḥśāsana,
and my own son
Lakṣmaṇa,
these and thousands of others,
all dead –

35 To that heaven
I now go,
a lonely traveller, empty-handed.
Her brothers dead,
her husband dead –
when she hears this,

36 My poor sister Duḥśalā,
stricken with grief,
what will happen to her?
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, my father,
his daughters-in-law
and grand-daughters-in-law,

37 And my mother Gāndhārī –
what will happen to them?
And,
her son dead,
her husband dead,
the mother of Lakṣmaṇa,

38 The graceful and gracious
large-eyed lady
will surely take her life!
If the lord-of-eloquence
religious mendicant Cārvāka
gets to know of this,

39 That mahā-fortune-favoured ascetic
will surely avenge
my death.
And sacred Samanta-pancaka,
celebrated
in the three worlds, –

40 By dying here I am assured
of a place
in the Eternal Realm."
O respectworthy one!
There were tears in the eyes
of the thousands

41 Who heard this lament
of king Duryodhana.
Then they quickly went
their various ways.
The sea-and-forest-filled,
animate-and-inanimate-creatured Earth

42 Shook dreadfully,
and thunder reverberated,
and darkness dimmed the directions.
The messengers
reported as instructed
to Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

43 O descendant of Bharata!
They reported the details
of the mace-duel,
and the manner
the king was struck down,
to Droṇa's son.

44 Then, the grieving messengers
waited for a while,
lost in sorrow-filled thoughts;
after this, carrying their anguish,
they went back
the same way they came.

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 Getting news of Duryodhana's fall
from the messengers, O rājā,
(continued Sañjaya),
the surviving Kaurava mahā-chariot-heroes,

2 Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa,
and the Sātvata Kṛtavarman –
all wounded by sharp arrows,
maces,
and *tomara*-lances
and śakti-spears –

3 Mounted their chariot,
and galloped
to the field of battle.
They saw the mahātmā
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
lying on the ground,

4 Like a mahā-śāla-tree
toppled by a storm
in a forest.
Bathed in blood,
squirming and writhing
in agony,

5 He looked like a mahā-elephant
felled by a hunter
in a forest.
Blood dripped from his body
as he shifted
right and left.

6 Like the sun-*cakra* dropping
by itself on earth,
like the entire ocean
drying up
by the ceaseless blowing
of a mahā-powerful tempest.

7 Like the moon-maṇḍala
in the sky
obscured by mist,
long-armed,
elephant-strong Duryodhana
lay in the dust.

8 Like wealth-and-favour-seeking menials
surrounding
a magnificent king,
fierce flesh-eating *bhūta*-creatures
and carnivores
surrounded Duryodhana.

9 Wrinkles furrowed his forehead,
anger flamed in his eyes.
That formidable
tiger-among-men
crouched there
like a cornered tiger.

10 Seeing that mahā-bowman
king Duryodhana
helpless on the ground,
the great chariot-heroes –
all three of them –
were horrified.

11 Alighting from their chariots,
they ran towards the rājā.
Their eyes
fixed
on Duryodhana,
they sat near him.

12 Mahārāja! Aśvatthāman's eyes
filled with tears.
His voice quavered
as he said
to the lord-of-all-the-worlds
finest of Bharatas:

13 "O tiger-among-men!
There is no truth left
in this world of men,
nothing,
that a hero like you
should be rolling in the dust!

14 O Indra-among-rājās!
You ruled
the world's kings,
you commanded the earth –
and you now, alone,
and rejected!

15 O bull-brave Bharata!
I do not see Duḥśāsana.
Nor the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa;
nor any of your friends.
Why?
What is wrong?

16 Weird and wayward
are the ways of the ender-of-days
Kṛtānta-Yama,
and weird the ways of the world
that you should be rolling
in the dust like this!

17 This foe-crushing monarch
who marched at the head of kings
whose heads were
anointed with lustral water –
rolling in the dusty grass!
See! How Kāla changes all!

18 O finest of earth-lords!
O king!
Where is your pure white
umbrella,
your yak-tail fan,
your mahā-army?

19 Who knows what cause leads
to what effect?
You were the Loka-guru,
the world's preceptor –
and look what has happened
to you now.

20 The world was your Śrī
goddess of prosperity,
and you were its Śakra-Indra.
It is clear now
that unstable and fickle
is the success of mortals."

21 O rājā! These deeply grieving words
of Aśvatthāman
so moved
your son Duryodhana
that tears brimmed
in his eyes.

22 Wiping those tears of grief
with both his hands,
your son said these relevant words
to Kṛpa
and the other
heroic rulers:

23 "Death is loka-dharma,
mortal is this world.
The Creator ordained it so –
so they say.
In the fullness of Kāla,
death comes to all.

24 So death has come to me.
You see it
in front of you.
Once I lorded the earth;
now,
I lie on that earth.

25 But I am happy –
I never turned my back in battle,
no matter what.
They have killed me,
yes, these evil men,
but deceitfully.

26 I am happy –
I was strong and brave
on the field of battle.
I am happy –
my friends and relatives dead,
I am dying with them.

27 I am happy –
to see you survive
this horrible carnage.
Not just survived –
my great good fortune
you are safe and sound.

28 I know you love me –
but please do not suffer
the pain of my death.
If you believe in the Vedas,
remember: they say I will go
to the Eternal Realm.

29 I grant the glory
of illimitably radiant Krishna.
But I was not blinded by him.
I remained loyal
to the principles
of Kṣatriya-dharma.

30 Do not feel sorry for me.
I have attained
the fruits of that faith.
And you have done
what persons like you
are expected to do.

31 But fate is fate.
Who can quarrel
with the working of fate?"
As he said this,
the eyes of Duryodhana
filled with tears

32 And, O Indra-among-rājās,
so deep was his grief
that he became silent.
Seeing rājā Duryodhana
in that intensity
of extreme anguish,

33 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
burned with anger
as all-consuming
as the fire of doomsday.
In his wrath he pressed
one hand on another,

34 And in a tear-choked voice
he said
to rājā Duryodhana:
"These wretched Pāṇḍavas
killed my father
cruelly.

35 O rājā! I think of that,
and I burn –
and I burn seeing you.
Prabhu! Lord!
I vow this truly.
Listen to me.

36 By my *iṣṭa*-rituals,
by my *āpūrta* good deeds,
by my charity, my dharma,
my selfless karma, today,
before Vāsudeva-Krishna's very eyes,
all the Pāñcālas –

37 I vow I will despatch them
to the realm of Yama,
the rājā of the spirits
of the dead.
Mahārāja! Grant me your permission
to do this."

38 The heart-pleasing words
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
delighted
the Kaurava king Duryodhana;
turning to Kṛpa,
he said:

39 "Ācārya!
Quickly!
Fetch me a vessel of water,
filled to the brim.
Obeying the rājā,
the finest-of-Brahmins

40 Kṛpa brought a vessel
full of water
and placed it before the rājā.
O mahārāja!
O lord of the world!
Your son said to him:

41 "O finest of the twice-born!
Bhadraṁ te! May you prosper!
If you wish to please me,
anoint Droṇa's son
commander-in-chief
of our army.

42 Those who know dharma say:
If a rājā so orders,
it is consonant
with Kṣatriya dharma
for a Brahmin
to take up arms and fight.

43 Abiding by the command
of rājā Duryodhana,
Śaradvat's son Kṛpa
anointed Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
as the Kaurava
commander-in-chief.

44 *Abhiṣeka*-installation over,
Aśvatthāman embraced
finest-of-kings Duryodhana
and, rending the horizon
with lion-roars of victory,
he left.

45 O Indra-among-rājās!
Bathed in blood,
Duryodhana passed the night
there –
a night that brought terror
to all creatures.

46 O king Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
The three grief-stricken warriors
quickly left
the battlefield,
brooding and planning
what to do next.

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

V O W E L S

Guttural	अ	आ	
	a	ā	
Palatal	इ	ई	
	i	ī	
Labial	उ	ऊ	
	u	ū	
Dental	ऋ		
	ṛ		
Guttural-Palatal		ए	ऐ
	e	ei	
Guttural-Labial		ओ	औ
	o	au	

C O N S O N A N T S

Guttural	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvāra = ṁ

CANTO IX

Śalyaparva : The Book of Lamentation

Chapter 74 — *Śalyavadhaparva (Śalyaparva(n)* in Cal.Ed. Chapter. 80) : Relating to the killing of Salya. Sec. 1–16 [Cr.Ed.]; 1–28 (Cal.Ed.)

Chapter 75 — *Hradapravesa parva(n)* (Chap. 81 in Cal.Ed.) : Relating to *Duryodhana's* going into hiding into the '*hrada*' (Lake *Dvaipāyana*). Sec. 17-28[Cr.Ed.] Sec. 29-31 (Cal.Ed.)

Chapter 76 — *Tirthayātrāparva* [only in Cr. Ed.]: Relating to the pilgrimage of *Balarāma*. Sec. 29–53. [Cr. Ed.].

- *i) *Tritopakhyānam*: Episode of *Trita* and his brothers
- ii) *Skandābhiṣeka* : Investiture of *Skanda*.
- iii) *Śrutāvatyupākhyānaṃ* : Episode of *Śrucavāti*.
- *iv) *Vṛddhakanyopākhyānaṃ*: Episode of Vṛddhakanya.

Chapter 77 — *Gadāyuddhaparva(n)* (Chap. 82 in Cal.Ed.) : The last combat between *Bhīma* and *Duryodhana* (with the mace).

Sec. 54-64 [Cr.Ed.]; 32–65 (Cal.Ed.)

- i) *Duryodhanorubhaṅga*: The breaking of *Duryodhana*'s thigh.
- ii) *Baladeva Vāsudeva-saṁvāda* : A dialogue between *Balarāma* and *Kṛṣṇa*.
- iii) *Drauṇisenāpatyābhiṣeka*: The installation of Aśvatthāmā as Commander.

Courtesy:

Madhusraba Dasgupta
Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)



P. Lāl reading the 334th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata on 2 July 2006 at G. D. Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

[*Sketch by Nilima Sen-Gangopadhyay*]

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kolkata Calendar



One of the paintings on display at Master's Collection Art Gallery

READING SESSION

GD Birla Sabhagar
Professor P Lal reads Sanjaya's report to raja Dhritarashtra of Sahadev killing Uluka and Sakuni, and a despondent Duryodhana fleeing from Kuruksetra after his brothers are all killed, in the 452th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, presented by Sanskriti Sagar on December 14 at 11 am. P Lal reads his Adi Parva version daily also on Tara TV News at 6.20 am, 7.20 am, 8.20 am and 4.20 am, 5.20 am, 6.20 am, 7.20 am, 8.20 am and 8.20 pm on Sunday. On Tara TV Music at 5.50 am, and on TV Southasia on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday at 2.15 pm and 5.50 pm.

THE TELEGRAPH

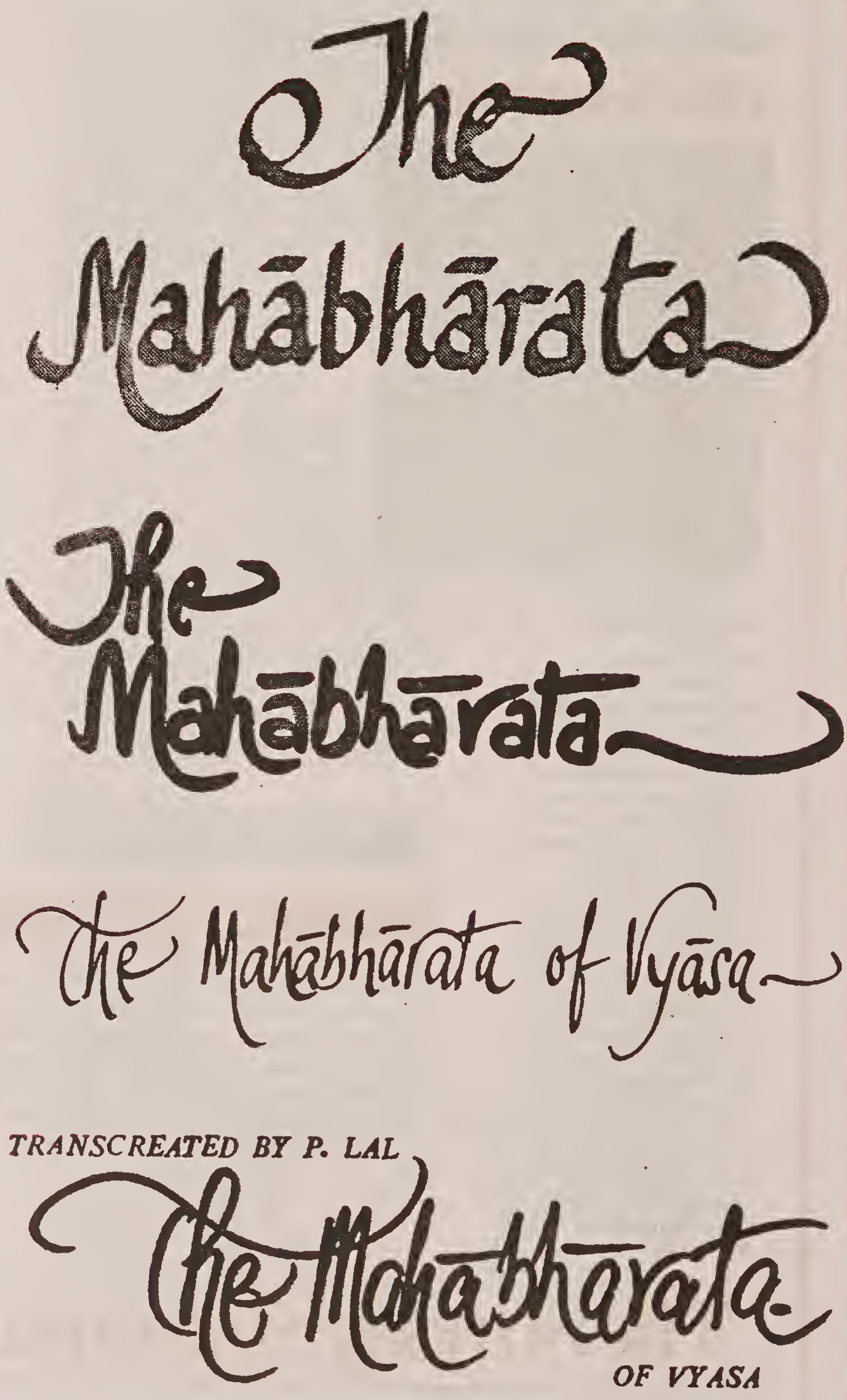
READING

■ **October 19 at G.D. Birla Sabhagar; 11 am:** Professor P. Lal reads Sanjaya's report of confused clashes involving Duryodhana, Dhristadyumna, Arjuna, Asvatthaman and Salya, with Bhima defeating Duryodhana and Yudhisthira defeating Salya, in the 444th weekly session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*.

The Sunday Statesman

ENGAGEMENTS

■ Prof P Lal reads the skirmishes on Kuruksetra between Duryadhana, Dhristadyumna, Salya, Nakula and Satyaki in the 443rd weekly session of his English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G D Birla Sabhagar; 11-00



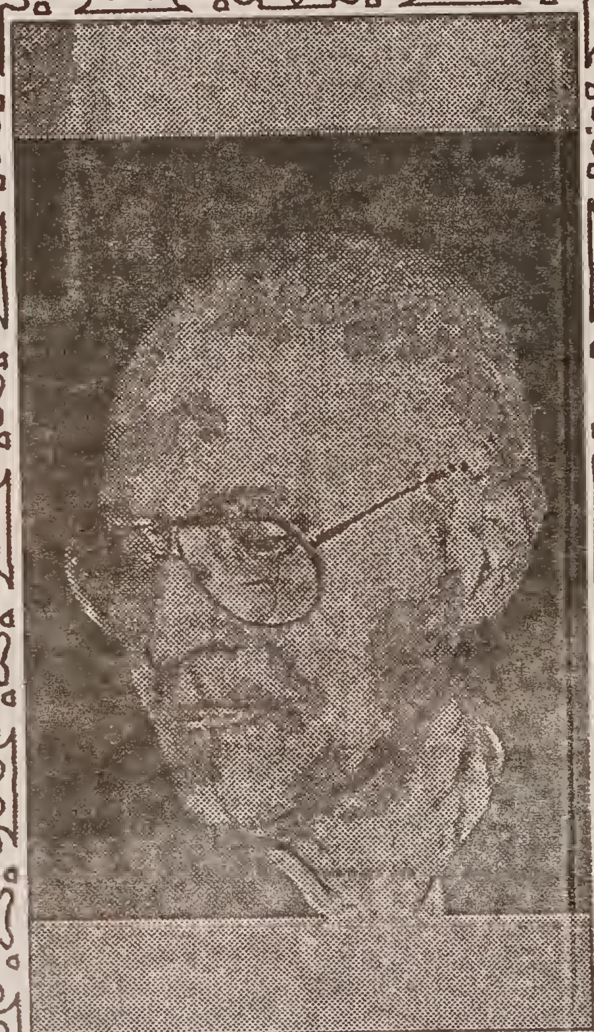
The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.

A Portfolio of Mahābhārata Paintings

P. Lal

This remarkable collection, edited by P. Lal, contains reproductions of over sixty paintings by Nandalal Bose, Abanindranath Tagore, Raja Ravi Verma, and other masters of the Bengal Renaissance period. All deal with episodes from Vyāsa's mahā-kāvya *Mahābhārata.* Many of them are rare paintings from the collection of Ramananda Chatterjee, who edited *The Modern Review, Prabasi* and *Vishal Bharat.* The book also contains an essay by P. Lal on the meaning of the *Mahābhārata.*

[HB Rs 120 FB Rs 100]



ॐ The Mahābhārata

Appearing in single-volume format from WRITERS WORKSHOP
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Book 5 : The Udyoga Parva (2006)
Book 6 : The Bhīṣma Parva (2006)
Book 7 : The Droṇa Parva (2007)
Book 8 : The Karṇa Parva (2007)
Book 9 : The Śalya Parva (2007)
Book 10 : The Sauptika Parva (2008)
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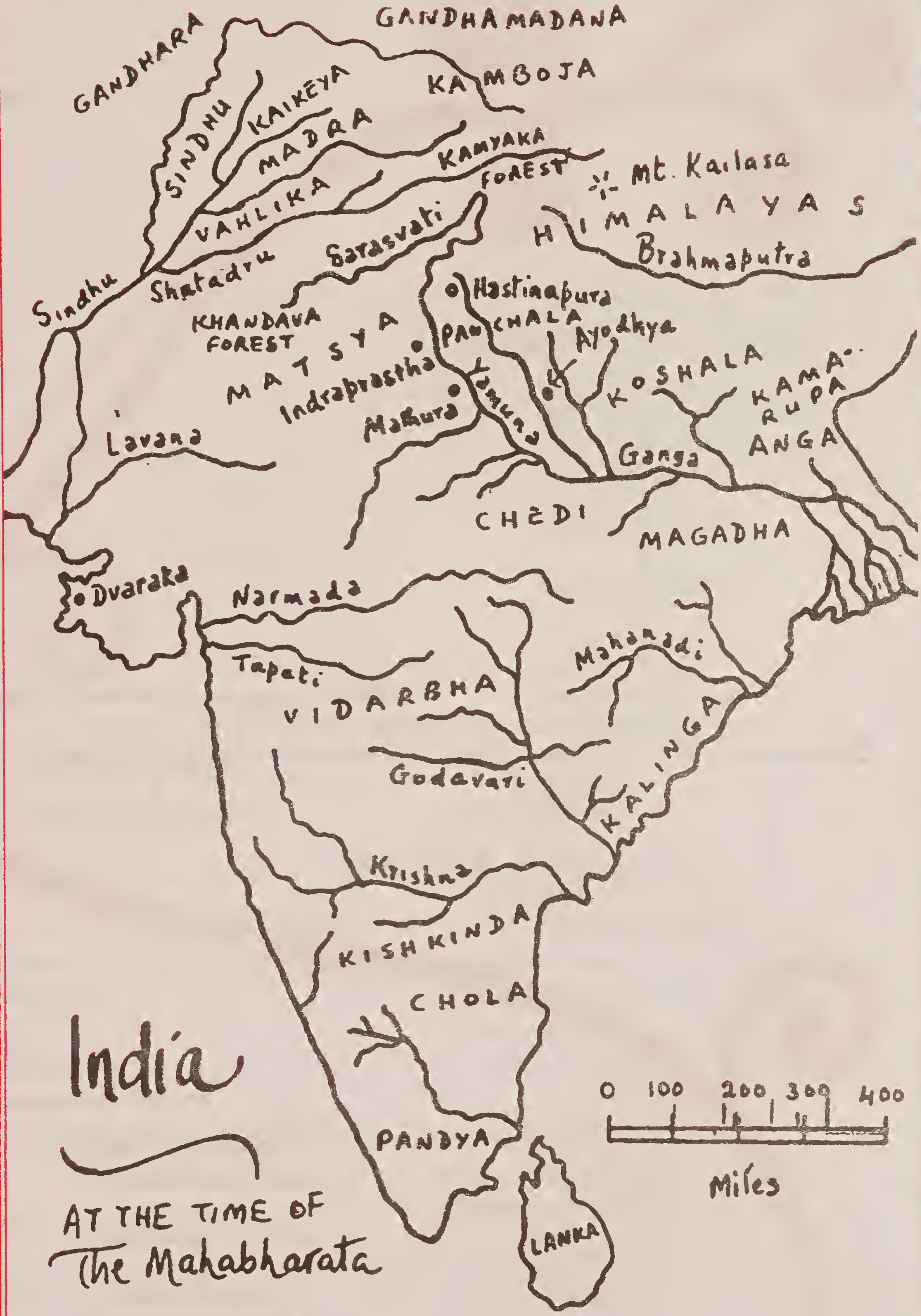
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Prefaces & Notes to Vyāsa's Ādi Parva
Prefaces and Notes to Vyāsa's Sabhā Parva
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śakuntalā Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yayāti Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Mandapāla Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Draupadī-Svayamvara Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Sāvitrī-Satyavān Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Nala-Damayantī Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śiśupāla-Vadha Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā



Ārya-varta
at the time of the Mahābhārata

Sketch by P. Lal based on *The Historical Atlas of South Asia*
[University of Minnesota]



Sketch by P. Lal

The Mahabh

Atri

Soma (Chand

marries Dev

(The Yadava race)

Yayati marries Devayani

↓

Yadu (& another son Anu)

↓

Vrishni (son)

↓

Devarata (son)

↓

Andhaka (son)

↓

Shura (son)

Vasudeva (son) — Kunti (daughter) marries Pandu

Balarama (son) — Krishna (son) marries Satyabhama — Subhadra (daughter) marries Arjuna

↓ Samba (son of Jambavati)

↓ Abhimanyu (son)

(Line extinct)

(Satyavat
union with t
has so
Vichitravi

by union with a Vaishya woman
↓
Yuyutsu
(youngest son)

Dhritarashtra
(son by Ambika)
↓
marries Gandhari
↓
Duryodhana
& ninetynine sons
& a daughter
Duhshala

Pandu
marries
↓
Yudhishthi
Dhar
Bhima (son
Arjuna (son
Arjuna mar

Family Tree

?ishi

du) the Moon

)

n)

)
Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha
↓
Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)
↓
Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala
↓
Bharata (son)
↓
Hastin (son)
↓
Kuru (son)
↓
Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

e-marriage union with Ganga
↓
Bhishma (son)

sa
her pre-marriage
?arashara: Vyasa
two widows of
ika & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

Ambalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

and

Madri
↓
Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

)

)

adra

nyu (son) marries Uttara
↓
Parikshit (son)
↓
Janamejaya (son)

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

On the following pages are facsimile reproductions of pages from different Mahābhārata fascicules (#235-263) of the Śalya Parva, showing the Sanskrit notes and calligraphy fascicules and additions by P. Lal. These were prepared for the reading sessions of the transcreation, presented under the auspices of the Sanskriti Sagar in the Library of Dharma and Culture at the G.D. Birla Sabhagar in Kolkata. Started in October 1999, P. Lal has so far (February 2008) read 410 one-hour sessions, followed by question-and-answer periods of up to half an hour.

46 My brothers, my friends —
what else but ill luck,
destined to be so?
It must be we are born
with our future
already decided —

47 It's the lucky ones
who always prosper.
Isn't that so, Sañjaya?
With all my sons dead,
it must be
I am the unlucky one.

48 What will be the fate
of an old man
in his enemy's clutches?
O lordly Sañjaya!
What is left for me now
but forest-exile?

18 Will never cross me.
Even the mahā-ocean
stops at the shore.
Today, Arjuna, Govinda-
Krishna, arrogant wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma,

19 And other enemies will I kill,
and thus pay back
the debt I owe Karṇa."
Inspired by these
hero-worthy words of the
Kaurava-rājā Duryodhana,

20 The charioteer slowly urged
forward the gold-
caparisoned horses.
O respect-worthy monarch!
Without elephant, horse and chariot
support, foot-soldiers —

19 And prepare themselves,
every way they can,
for the massive onslaught.
Today, I will send
the Pāndavas fleeing
in all directions.

20 O radiant one! O Kaurava!
For your sake today,
I will excel Drona and Bhīṣma
and the charioteer's son
Karṇa, and roam the field
of battle as I please."

21 O respectworthy monarch!
O descendant of Bharata!
(continued Sañjaya) In this way
he removed the despair
that had gripped your warriors
after Karṇa's death.

63 And Dhṛṣṭadyumna also,
and the other
Pāṇḍavas devastated
your army
with incessant showers
of arrows.

64 The leaders of the Kaurava
fell under
the onslaught of the arrows.
So bewildered were they,
they could not tell one
direction from another.

65 The arrows created utter chaos
in the Kaurava
ranks. Their chief warriors
slain, attacked
from all sides,
their offensive blocked...

30 Who now targeted Yudhiṣṭhira
with a shower
of super-sharp arrows.
But rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
incensed, stopped the charging
horses and foot-soldiers

31 With his own sharp arrows,
like an elephant-driver
stopping a massive elephant
with iron hooks.
Śalya then shot a dreadful
snake-poison arrow

32 Which sped swiftly, grazed
mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira,
and slid into the earth.
This so enraged wolf-
waisted Bhīma that with seven
arrows he wounded Śalya.

28 After briefly paying respect
to his guru's son
on the field of battle.
Foe-exterminating
ambidexterous Arjuna immobilised
the horses, charioteer and chariot

29 Of Aśvatthāman, and wounded
him with arrows
fired with effortless ease.
Standing firm
in his horseless chariot,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman

30 Hurled at Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
a musala-club
that resembled a parigha-
spiked iron mace.
Seeing that gold-ornamented club
speeding towards him,

30 All those bull-brave heroes
of the Kaurava dynasty,
shouting their joyous war-cries.
The tinkling of
elephant bells, the ululation
of blaring conches,

31 The scream of tūrya-trumpets
created a mahā-
cacophony that made the earth
shudder. Your son
Duryodhana and valiant Śalya
stood firm,

32 Like a sunrise mountain and
a sunset mountain
unmoved by torrential downpours.
War-valour-vainglorious
Śalya drenched foe-destroying
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

37 Listen to the lion-roaring
war-cries calculated
to frighten the warriors!
Drive slowly,
and see that the rear
is not disturbed.

38 I will stand firm in the rear
and block
the Pāṇḍava offensive.
This will inspire
my soldiers to return, re-group,
and fight afresh."

39 Complying with these hero-
worthy orders
of your son, his charioteer
slowly urged
the splendidly-caparisoned horses
as directed.

23 Their hands were calloused
with frequent pulling
of bow-strings, they terrorised
everything around them.
Meanwhile, heroic Śakuni
started targeting Yudhiṣṭhira.

24 O radiant lord!
Subala's son Śakuni
slaughtered the four horses
of Yudhiṣṭhira,
and inflamed his own army
with rousing war-cries.

25 Immediately, illustrious Sahadeva
drove up
in his chariot, and took
the never-defeated-
in-battle rājā Yudhisthira
to a place of safety.

72 Warriors of both sides,
battling, screamed,
"Me first, me first!"
in raging fury,
and massacred thousands
of fellow-soldiers.

73 Fatally wounded,
hundreds and thousands
of horse-riders
toppled on the ground,
and their horses
collapsed with them.

74 O lord of the world!
So many swift horses
lay writhing on the field.
Some were crushed
to pulp. So many men,
screaming and roaring,

58 I fell senseless on the field,
and I was
captured alive.
Then, before I knew it,
the elephant ranks
of our army

59 Were slaughtered
by Bhīma's mace
and Arjuna's nārāca-arrows.
On all sides
sprawled these hill-huge
mahā-elephants,

60 Whose corpses blocked
the advance
of the Pāṇḍava forces.
Mahā-powerful
Bhīma created
a chariot-path,

13 So many sliced heads
graced with earrings,
looking like lotuses,
lay on the field,
with staring eyes
and anger-bitten lips.

14 Mahārāja! Elephant-trunk-
shaped arms clutching
lances and hatchets,
arm-ornaments, armour,
and asi-swords,
mutilated headless

15 Upright bodies that seemed
to be dancing
on the field, and flesh-
eating scavenging beasts
roaming everywhere ~
a ghastly spectacle!

99 Explain that to me
in exact detail."
Yuyutsu replied:
"All friends, brothers,
and son of Śakuni dead,
Śakuni dead too,

100 Rājā Duryodhana, all
whose remaining
brothers had died too,
mounted his horse,
left the battlefield,
and fled east.

101 With the King leaving
his camp
and fleeing far away,
the frightened subjects
made their way
to the capital.

43 Kill all us Pārtha-Pāṇḍavas
and rule the kingdom,
or get killed by us
and go to the realm
that is reserved
for dead heroes."

44 Duryodhana replied:
"O Kaurava descendant!
O lord of men!
My Kaurava brothers
for whom I wanted this kingdom
are all dead.

45 All the bull-brave Kṣatriyas
of this world
have been massacred.
The earth is now
like a widow — I have no desire
to enjoy her.

4 I do not think you
can rout him
in mace-fight.
For thirteen years he
has practised
mace-combat,

5 O rājā, with an iron
statue of Bhīma.
O bull-brave Bharata!
How can you
expect us then
to succeed?

6 O unexcelled King!
You have exceeded your kindness
and created this problem.
I cannot see anyone
who can equal him
in mace-combat

22 The wicked brothers ~ a plan,
O lord of men,
which I will now explain.
"Trita is skilled
in yajña-performance, Trita
knows the Vedas.

23 He can always get
more cows ~
any number of them.
Let's take
these cows away
with us ~

24 Trita can go wherever
he likes ~
he doesn't need us."
Night fell.
In the dark, a wolf
blocked their way.

66 Looked after
by countless
ahimsā-practising
dharma-following
ṛṣis and ascetics ~
that was the tīrtha
called Sapta-sārasvata
where plough-weaponed
Halāyudha-Balarāma
came next
in the course
of his pilgrimage.

67 This was the tīrtha
where the perfected
mahā-muni
Maṅkanaka
performed
his great tapasyā.

10 "Aho! How shameful that
he has spoken
like this in the open court!"
Lost in thought
for some time, the enraged
finest-of-the-twice-born

11 Dālbhya decided that he
would destroy
the earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Slicing the corpses
into chunks of meat,
that finest-of-munis

12 Offered them in the sacred fire
as libations
of lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra's
kingdom. Lighting the fire
in the Avākīrṇa tīrtha
of the Sarasvatī river,

42 The confluence of Sarasvatī
and Aruṇā is
a tīrtha of mahā-holiness.
Perform a yajña
there, O Devendra-Indra,
and give generously.

43 Then bathe there, and you
will be freed
of your heinous crime."
O Janamejaya!
As instructed, near
the Sarasvatī's waters

44 He performed the ritual,
and then he bathed
in the Aruṇā;
and in this way
he was absolved
of Brahmin-murder.

102 Small-toothed,
maha-toothed,
thick-lipped, blue-haired;
feet, lips, teeth,
hands and necks
of all shapes and sizes.

103 O descendant of Bharata!
So many long-necked,
long-nailed, long-footed
and long-armed maha-
followers rushed towards
Skanda from all sides.

104 Their bodies covered with
various leather dresses,
speaking various languages,
fluent in all
the languages of the land,
skilled conversationalists.

39 Sweet-voiced like the kokila,
some; rolling in wealth
like Dhanada-Kubera, some;
valiant like Śakra-
Indra, some; resplendent
like Vahni-Agni, some.

40 Always fierce on the field
of battle
to their enemies;
changing form
as and when they please,
and swift as the wind.

41 Unimaginable their strength
and their valour
and their wondrous exploits.
They inhabit trees
and open spaces
and four-road crossings;

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from the Sanskrit by P. Lāl

Volume 256

The Baladeva-tīrtha-yātrāyām Sārasvatopākhyāna and Badarapācana-tīrtha-kathana in Śalya Parva

SECTION 47

1 "Utterly wonderful, O Brahmin,"
said Janamejaya,
"is your detailed account of Kumāra-
Skanda's abhiṣeka-installation.

2 O tapasyā-rich one! My ātman
has been purified,
I horripilate with delight,
my heart is overjoyed.

41 Eating his meals regularly,
and continuing
his study of the Vedas.
Twelve years passed,
the drought ended, and the mahā-
ṛṣis wanted to study more,

42 Because they had forgotten
the Vedas during
their hunger-driven wanderings.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Not one glorious ṛṣi
now knew the Vedas,

43 As the Vedas should
rightly be known.
And that was why
some of the ṛṣis
decided to go
to Sārasvata,

SECTION 53

1 Balarāma! (said the ṛṣis)
Samanta-pañcaka
is an eternal tīrtha.
It is the northern
vedī-altar of
Prajāpati-Brahmā.
The mahā-boon-granting gods
performed many yajñas
here in the past.

2 The wise and radiant
finest of rāja-ṛṣis
mahātmā Kuru
tended this field
over many years
in the distant past.
That is the reason
it is called Kurukṣetra,
the Field of the Kurus.

2 " O blameless one!
How shameful that this
should happen to a man!
My son
Duryodhana commanded
eleven akṣauhiṇis.

3 He ordered so many kings,
he enjoyed
the wealth of the world.
And now ~ reduced
to this, mace in hand,
fighting on foot!

4 Master of the world,
my son, now, mace in hand,
fighting on foot like a slave!
It's all fate!
The hand of fate!
What else can you say?

61 And anxiety overcame them,
O bull-brave Bharata.
And the gods
and the gandharvas
and the apsarās
returned to their abodes,

62 Chanting the wonderful
kathā of your two sons
and singing their praises,
O Bharata descendant.
And the Siddhas
and air-coursing Vātikas
and the Cāraṇas,
O Indra-among-rājās,
also sang the praises
of the two cousin-brothers,
your sons.

51 " Mahārāja!
This world
is yours now.
I have plucked out
its thorns.
It is once more
a glorious place
Rule it,
and cherish it
with your sva-dharma

52 O ruler
of the earth!
This man who loved
deceit and dishonesty,
this man who fomented
hate and bitterness ~
he is dead,
he sleeps forever
on the bare earth.

36 Then, unyoking their horses,
they rested
briefly. At that time,
the valiant Pāṇḍavas
and Sātyaki
were there together.

37 Mahārāja! Mahā-renowned
Vāsudeva-Krishna
said to them: "We should sleep
outside the camp
on this auspicious
first night."

38 Saying, "We will do so,"
the Pāṇḍavas
and Sātyaki, accompanied
by Vāsudeva-Krishna,
for their auspicious welfare
stepped outside the camp.

13 "O tiger-among-men!
There is no truth
in this world of men,
nothing, that a hero
like you should be
rolling in the dust!

14 O Indra-among-rājās!
You ruled
the world's kings, you
commanded the earth —
and you now, alone,
and rejected!

15 O bull-brave Bharata!
I do not see Duḥśasana.
Nor the mahā-chariot-hero
Karṇa; nor any
of your friends. Why?
What is wrong?

Corrections

VOLUME X : THE SAUPTIKA PARVA

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
ISBN page	3	Invoked by Ashvatthaman	Delete. He invokes Mahadeva. Kali appears in the massacre but is not invoked.
6	4	lust	lost
9	4	Pandava camp	camp
10	1	indestructive	indestructible by all creatures (avadhya sarvabhutanam)
10	2	as strong as steel	adamantine
11	6	twiming	twining
15	2	brown	tawny
31	3	the trident-wielding	the raging trident-wielding
52	5	red-haired	red-complexioned
58	5	abliterate	obliterate
63	3	Lord Śiva	Lord Īśvara
64	1	with	wish
72	4	pierced the chest	struck the flank
81	3	seasame sticks	sesame stalks
102	5	kill	vanquish
103	5-6	are the ones/who have killed my family members	are the ones/who have been killed
103	1	Infuricated	Infuriated
103	last line	maha-bows	Maha-arrows (shara)
103	2	moonrise	moonrise's sweeping tide
106	6	Draupadi	Devyā-Draupadi
108	5	affering	offering
116	1	game	gave
118	3	went	want
120	last line	Vāsava. Indra	Vasava-Indra
128	5	massace	massacre
130	4-5	On on account / will I	Never should I

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
133	2	infalliable	infallible
138	4	Śiva	Avyayam-Śiva
139	4	Girisa	Giriśa
139	3	human	creatures'
143	4-5	Guha-yajña: Domestic Sacrifice/Sanātana-yajña	Sanatana Guha-yajña: Eternal Domestic Sacrifice
143	4	Loka-yajña	Loka-yajña and
144	2	bow	Nya-yajña bow-end

Preface p.6 para 3: Samanta-pancaka is 5 lakes of blood, not seven created by Parashurama.
Para4: Bali was overcome in the Vamana-avatara not the boar-redeemer.

VOLUME XI : THE STRĪ PARVA

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
6	Preface (10 from bottom)	bes	bees
23	6	sap	pith
39	3	maha-medicine	the medicine of wisdom, maha-medicine
39	5	Brahmā's	Brahman's
41	3	Krsnā	Krsna
49	6	reason	wisdom
63	1	Ignoving	Ignoring
69	6	Arjuna	Bhima (madhyama)
70	1	trawel	travel
76	2	Whn	When
80	5	cme	come
85	2	senseles	senseless
86	2	mascular	muscular
96	1	more	move
98	3	wax	war
100	5	bull	maha-elephant
105	6	embruce	embrace
109	2	sacked	soaked
138	4	Sixty six cores	ten arbuda-billion sixty six crores.

VOLUME XIV : THE ĀŚVAMEDHIKA PARVA

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
18	4	prabh	prabhu
26	5	assist you	your assistance
31	4	furbids	forbids
34	4	weapos	weapons
34	3	Śiva	Śiva
37	3	Samvarta	Saṁvarta
37	4	though	thought
58	3	appears	appear
59	4		Add single quote to end the speech
63	3	hari	hair
73	3	leained	learned
81	4	The	the
84	4	abider	abides
92	2		close quotation marks
100	1	sastainer	sustainer
105	4	skin	ear
113	1	Sāmāna	Samāna
114	4	kāraṇa, karmā	karṇa, karma
115	2	worlds	words
118	9	livid	lived
128	6		Add closing quotes
128	1		Add opening quotes and (the adhvaryu said)
129	4	hudreds	hundreds
141	4	circimference	circumference
147	5	nānatva	nānātva
147	3	abhiman	abhimana
148	4	ar tha	artha
149	1	Vāsiṣṭha	Vasiṣṭha
149	1	Angirasa	Āṅgirasa
153	5	taltvas	tattvas
153	10	panea	panca
156	4	tomas	tamas
157	1	kama	kāma
161	4	Prakaśya	Prākāśya
166	4	prāna	prāṇa

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
174	2	adhidavata	adhidaivata
174	2	-do-	-do-
175	2	-do-	-do-
175	2	-do-	-do-
176		-do-	-do-
179	5	subflest	subtlest
187	4	symbole	symbol
189	2	sare	sure
190	3	district	destruct
190	4	indestrict	indestruct
200	1	śrāddhā	śraddhā
218	5	Daivata	Dhaivata
219	1	bhūtāmā	bhūtātmā
224	2	Brahma	Brahmā
232	4	take	took
232	4	Anārta	Ānarta
234	4	Sātyaka	Sātyaki
235	8	Anartapurī	Ānartapuri
235	2	krishna	Krishna
239	4	th	to
239	2	Adhyātmā	Adhyātma
239	3	-do-	-do-
241	3	kalpaka	kalpa-rule expert
242	2	is	in
243	2	What	With
244	3	Purana	Purana-Purusa
252	3	you	your
252	6		Insert at beginning: "Advised by his guru"
281	3-4	Maha-muscled Brahmins statiated by Krishna's	Brahmins satiated by maha-muscled Krishna's
281	2	Balarama	Balarāma
282	14	entice	entire
285	2	Brahma-breather	Brahma-knower
287	2	the rout the	the rout of the
287	2	swetened	sweetened
292	3-4	Śankha.... and Nidhipālas	with śankha....the Nidhipālas
310	3	rājā	rāja

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
332	2	Bhagadatta	Bhagadatta's son
333	3	drive	driven
346	3	palm-symbolled	palm tree tall
362	4	houses	horses
365	4	Śvetavāhana	Śuktisāhvyā
368	3	igored	ignored
374	3	anijal	animal
375	3	rares	races
376	4	Balarama	Balarāma
385	1	Them	Then
386	3-4	Each had in it a golden bird in the image of Garuda	Each was triangular with golden wings and shaped like Garuda
387	last line	marrow	fat and marrow
387	3	brother	brothers
391	4	wealt	wealth
391	3	for	foe
393	1	bull	blue
393	3	a golden skin	one side golden
393	3	me	one
393	last line	ucchavṛtti	uncchavṛtti
396	4	ucchavṛtti	uncchavṛtti
397	last line	uccha	unccha
397	4	sarred	sacred
400	5	bharta	bhartā
401	3	yu	you
401	5	uccha	unccha
407	5	fine	subtle
416	6	Arṣtiseṇa	Ārṣtiseṇa
417	6	an	on
417	7	asceties	ascetics
418	4	vilence	violence
420	1	tome	to me
421	5	iabstaining	abstaining
422	4	Tridaseśvara	Tridaśeśvara
423	5	harmof	harmed
424	3	dharmāsanya	dharmāranya

VOLUME XV : THE ĀŚHRAMAVĀSIKA PARVA

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
31	2	your	you
47	3	namakāra	namaskāra
51	2	Samvara	Saṁvaraṇa
61	3	single quote	Delete
61	last		close single quote
63	5	plenitude	plenitude
64	2	gilt	gift
82	4	Puramdara	Purandara
90	1	Janadhipa	Janadhīpa
90	last	as	us
94	1	āshram	āshrama
94	3	florked	flocked
100	2	āshram	āshrama
102	5	-do-	-do-
105	6	-do-	-do-
107	3	-do-	-do-
107	2,4	-do-	-do-
109	4	And Gandhari, your daughter-in-law	And daughter-in-law Gandhari
110	2	Vidura	delete
116	3	yeas	years
143	5	of	delete
145	last	our	air
145	1	yajāka	yājaka

VOLUME VI : THE MAUSALA PARVA

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
11	2	fute	fate
15	3	change the Amavasya	change to the Pancadasi
15	1	hapeening	happening
15	2	saw	saw and told me
16	5	their	their
17	1	their	the
18	7	Yadavas	Yādavas
18	5	Satrajit	Satrājit
20	2	Sātaki	Sātyaki

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
21	4	gras	grass
26	3-4	The body/of Durvasas	His body/by Durvasas
26	5	pāyasa-curd	Pāyasa-rice pudding
27	4	Jarā	Jarā arrived hunting deer
27	5	ochre	yellow
30	1	extolled to them	consoled the women extolling
30	4	their	his
32	4	mountains	mountainous
32	3	nconcerned	unconcerned
13	6	Sanātāna	Sanātana
36	3	Vāsudeva	Vasudeva
36	2	Mandirā	Madirā
37	3	fneral	funeral
38	3	Balārama	Balarāma
40	2	maces	clubs
41	1	long-sized	very lengthy
41	2	raped	abducted
43	3	āshram	āshrama
47	5	grieve them	grieve for them

VOLUME VII : THE MAHĀPRASTHĀNIKA PARVA

Page	Line	Instead of	Read
6	Preface (7 from bottom)	wallowen	wallower
13	5	lake	sea
17	1	None one	No one
18	3	boasted	boasted ignoring others
18	Last line	earlier	often earlier
19	1	Puramdara	Purandara
20	6	shelter	shelter
23	2	Purumdara	Purandara

VOLUME VIII : THE SVARGĀROHAṆA PARVA

Page	*Line*	*Instead of*	*Read*
5	Preface (2)	labouious	laborious
6	4	Moksa	Mokṣa
37	5-6	employment of the sacrificial asi-sword	Ashvamedha
65	2	To his son Śuka	ślokaiś caturbhir bhagavān putram abhyapayac chukam (Critical Edn.) "To his son Suka along with these four verses".

Missing from the Sanskrit text reproduced on p.64, the following shloka in the critical edition:

18005046a maharṣih bhagavān vyāsaḥ kḥṁtvemāṁ saṁhitāṁ purā

18005046c ślokaiś caturbhir bhagavān putram adhyāpayac chukam

The Māhabhārata Family Tree errors:

1. The Yādava race is shown as "Line extinct" after Samba, whereas it is carried forward:
   Krishna+Rukmiṇī→ Pradyumna→ Aniruddha→ Vajra (in Indraprastha)
2. Śantanu does not have Bhīṣma "by pre-marriage union with Gan ˙gā". He very much married Gaṅgā, who was his first queen.

THE TURNING OF THE WHEEL AND THE AGENBITE OF PRIVATE IN-WIT

Pradip Bhattacharya

The Complete Sauptika Parva of Vyasa's Mahabharata transcreated from the Sanskrit into English by Padma Shri P. Lal, Writers Workshop, 173 pages, Rs.200 hardback, Rs.100 flexiback, Rs.500 for a special numbered & signed edition, with an original hand-painted Oriya pata-chitra.

Verse translations of Vyasa's mighty poem are rare. R.C.Dutt polished off the *Book of Sleepers* in seven rhymed couplets in his 1898 rendering of the *Mahabharata.* The World's Classics published in 1998 *The Massacre at Night*, a metrical translation of the critical edition of this Parva by W.J. Johnson. Now we have Prof. Lal's free verse transcreation of the most complete Sanskrit version. The special edition carries a frontispiece of "Durga/Kali invoked by Ashvatthaman" which is erroneous. It is Mahadeva who is invoked and Kâlî appears during the carnage on her own.

What is the backdrop for the *Sauptika*? Yudhishthira has killed the last Kaurava general, Shalya; Bhima has smashed Duryodhana's thighs; the war has ended in a Pandava victory. Or has it? Strangely enough, Krishna leads the five brothers and Satyaki away from the camp for the night. We sense that something ominous is brewing. Ashvatthama, swearing eternal vengeance, has been anointed by Duryodhana as the last commander leading a force of two: Kripacharya and Kritavarma. What follows is the *Book of Sleepers* (named in the last verse of section 3 referring to the Panchala army). Its very first verse has Ashvatthama, Kritavarma and Kripa proceeding south, the direction ruled by Yama, lord of death, to perpetrate a horrendous massacre that assumes the dimensions of a holocaust. All-devouring Time (picturesquely termed by Prof. Lal as "the Black Hole of Kâlî") has no use for human canons of battle; it consumes

the virtuous and the wicked indiscriminately. What a twist in the tale does Vyasa the master raconteur weave into the incredibly complex web of meaning that is the *Mahabharata*!

Deep underneath the turgid current of blood and marrow flows silently the stream of Karma, inexorably pursuing its victims like the Erinyes; what Prof. Lal – paraphrasing Dan Michelis of the 14th century and James Joyce– calls, "the agenbite of private in-wit, the purifying tapasya of penance". His preface succinctly differentiates between Christian guilt and Karma that is irredeemable, that rides on one's back like the Vetal on Vikram's or the old man of the island on Sindbad's. For Ashvatthama, the pangs of conscience are to last for 3000 years, with a body oozing blood and pus. What is of interest is that while one accomplice Kritavarma is killed in the *Mausala Parva,* the other, his maternal uncle Kripa, suffers nothing. As he told Yudhishthira in the *Bhishma Parva*, he cannot be killed in battle and seems to be beyond even criticism!

There are problems, however, with the 8 *chirajivi* Prof. Lal lists as "immortals". Monier-Williams' Sanskrit dictionary defines *chiranjivin* as "long-lived" and applying to Markandeya, Ashvatthama, Bali, Vyasa, Hanuman, Vibhishana, Kripa and Parashurama. Narada does not feature, nor does he strum a one-stringed guitar, but plays the veena. Parashurama is mentioned by Narada to Shrinjaya (*Drona Parva* 70.1, 24) as one of the 16 rulers who died with desires unfulfilled. Further, he made 5, not 7, lakes of blood. Bali was overcome by Vishnu incarnated not as a boar but as a dwarf (Vamana).

This *parva* is loaded with the irony of reversal. The blind king rhetorically asks Sanjaya how he, once supreme ruler, can be expected to listen to Bhima's barbed words now. Yet, that is precisely what he will have to undergo for 15 years, until it becomes so unbearable that he has to retire to the forest. A distinct change of viewpoint occurs in section 9 where Duryodhana shines like an altar ringed by three flames,

> "radiant like gold,
>   this master of the mace,
> supine on ground
>   next to the gold-filigreed mace
> he loved so much!"

Vyasa brings home the bitter irony of life:

"hundreds of rajas once
paid fearful homage to him. Now,
he lies on the ground,
this hero,
surrounded by fearful beasts."

Once Brahmins waited upon him for munificent gifts; now carnivores wait to feast on his body. Sanjaya reports of the gruesome mission, "those who had killed us/ were now/ themselves dead" (section 8.151). Yudhishthira echoes this in section 10.12: "Our meaningful victory/has turned into/a meaningless defeat." The theme repeatedly articulated is "the topsy-turvy/ turnabout tricks/of Cosmic Time Kala" (9.14) which is another name for "daiva", fate that upsets the best efforts of mortals.

Even in this most terrible of war books there are astonishing bursts of evocative poetry. The taut, grim tension of the fleeing, fearful trio is suddenly relieved by a marvellous description of the enchanting forest with lakes teeming with lotuses, the star spangled sky tapestried in gold and silver embroidery. The three Kaurava survivors shelter under a giant banyan tree of thousand branches, hauntingly reminiscent of the cosmic tree, Yggdrasil. But it is also thousand limbed Kala that inspires Ashvatthama to imitate the night-ranging owl, ripping apart wings, slicing heads and legs, indiscriminately killing crows sleeping in its branches.

It is typical of Vyasa that he should present conflicting world-views. Ashvatthama discourses on ends and means, concluding that success justifies means. Bhishma's code is abandoned in favour of a nameless treatise advising killing enemies by any means, even if asleep. Ashvatthama admits that though born a Brahmin he unfortunately practises Kshatriya dharma and argues that it would be ignoble to abandon it now and revert to Brahmin dharma. Kripa advises him in vain not to chase success moved by anger, fear and greed and, being confused by disaster, to seek the advice of Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Vidura. Kripa warns that the most learned man without humility mistakes the true sense of Artha and Dharma, for which intelligence, sense-control and concentration are imperative. Repeatedly, here and in the subsequent parvas, it is advised to rule the *atman* by the *atman*, the ego by the super-ego. Kripa's warning to his nephew to heed

him or repent later is proven true. Ashvatthama, no less than Duryodhana, is blinded by his passions. Vyasa shows us time and again that, despite clear warnings, no one listens! Puzzlingly, Kripa joins in the carnage and intriguingly escapes all blame.

Ashvatthama sees himself as the raging forest fire. This is the first reminiscence of the remorseless burning of Khandava forest that recurs frequently in these later parvas. The image of Rudra the annihilator is consciously evoked and presides over this book. Ashvatthama imagines himself as the raging, all-annihilating, Pinaka wielder, to avenge his father's murder and the wrongs the Pandavas committed in killing Bhishma, Bhurishrava, Karna, Duryodhana. Ashvatthama condemns Krishna and Arjuna for proudly claiming to know dharma and then looking the other way.

Another image that grows more and more powerful in these later parvas is that of the war as *yajna*, climaxing in Ashvatthama offering himself as a sacrifice to Rudra. He determines to wrench Dhrishtadyumna's head like a sacrificial beast's so that he does not die weapon in hand and attain heaven. Twice the three assassins are described as three blazing sacred yajnic fires (the minimum prescribed) around a sacrificial altar (5.39, 9.8). By setting fire to the camp from three sides, turning it into a *yajna-vedi* as it were, they perpetrate veritably a ritual holocaust.

The apparition Ashvatthama sees at the camp's entrance is terrifyingly horripilating, in no way less than the image of all-devouring Kala in the *Gita*. From the flames of its apertures issue millions of Hrishikeshas and Janardanas, implying the oneness of Vishnu and Shiva. As in Arjuna's encounter with Mahadeva disguised as a Kirata in the *Vana Parva*, there is the same fearless attack, the same consuming of all missiles by Mahadeva and finally the same surrender that wins his grace. Ashvatthama had always been Arjuna's rival for Drona's favours. Maggi Lidchi Grassi's remarkable novel *The Battle of Kurukshetra* has Ashvatthama and Arjuna as the narrators, standing on opposites, but with a shared history, their lives interwoven.

Ashvatthama has a moment of sanity when he is worsted by the apparition and admits that he has swerved from the eternal path of the scriptures and faces disaster because the asleep or helpless are not to be attacked. Yet he persists, choosing the path less trodden. He uses his intellect to argue that the unsuccessful man is one who foolishly abandons a mission out of fear.

Macbeth-like, he even wonders if what he sees is a projection of the adharma he is pursuing, the fearful fruit of his decision. Significantly, he invokes Mahadeva in his destructive Rudra aspect, a skull garlanded ascetic, the plucker of Bhaga's eyes, drawing down darkness on the world. The paean that follows is particularly evocative, the original shlokas being quoted with the English transcreation following. Hordes of nightmarish creatures erupt, culminating in Ashvatthama offering himself as the sacrificial oblation with the Soma mantra (not given in the original, but thoughtfully supplied in Devanagari by the transcreator). This Mahadeva is certainly not the Rigvedic Rudra, nor the storm god of the *Bhrihaddevata* and the *Chandogya Upanishad*. He displays prominent malevolent traits that we first find in the *Taittiriya* and *Vajasaneyi Samhitas* and the *Yajur Veda's* "Shatarudriya" hymn.

Mahadeva reveals the secret of the Pandavas' success: he has been protecting the Panchalas to honour Krishna. Now their time is up. He infuses Ashvatthama with himself and gives him a divine sword. The innumerable Hrishikesha and Janaradana manifestations are no longer seen, indicating the withdrawal of Krishna in spirit complementing his physical absence that has occurred earlier. Ashvatthama is now Ishvara himself, sweeping through the camp "like doom-dispensing Kala" on rampage, like the fire of doom at yuga-end. The manner of killing is, however, differentiated. The Panchala principals are, like beasts, throttled for sacrifice to Pashupati, Ashvatthama doing a Bruce Lee with them, grinding their vital parts with his heels. As with Bhima after killing Duhshasana, all think him to be a demon.

> "Blood splattered all over him–
>   blood from sliced
> wriggling bodies, blood from
>   pulled-out sword
> from corpses, blood from
>   the hurled sword.
> He was a swaying sword,
>   a glittering mass
> of blood." –8.43-44

Transvestite Shikhandi is sliced in two. Bhima's son Sutasoma's sword arm is lopped off (as Bhurishrava's was by Arjuna) and his chest is ripped open (like Duhshasana's by Bhima).

Transgendered Arjuna's son Shrutakarma dies horribly disfigured, his face sliced open. Satanika, son of Nakula the handsomest of all, loses his head. There is confusion over Shrutakirti who is killed next. Is he Sahadeva's son Shrutasena?

Goddess Kali now appears (section 8), singing and swinging a grisly noose whirling away men and animals. Soldiers recall dreaming of her and Ashvatthama from the beginning. Ashvatthama severs ears, shoulders, heads, legs, arms, waists, backs, flanks, foreheads, slicing in two, grievously mutilating– never cleanly killing. The soldiers exclaim that Arjuna never kills anyone asleep, careless, unarmed, supplicant, fleeing; only demons do so. Kripa and Kritavarma–Sanjaya calls both ill-minded– kill even supplicants and roar with delight, clapping their hands (8.149). From three sides they set the camp on fire with Ashvatthama in murderous chase like enraged Pashupati, lord of creatures, and Kripa-Kritavarma manning the only exit. Creatures of flaming Khandava forest were similarly hemmed in by Arjuna and Krishna and slaughtered pitilessly. How infallible is Karma's pursuit! Ashvatthama's avenging sword is welded to his hand, recalling Parashurama's battle-axe avenging his murdered father in five lakes of Kshatriya blood at Kurukshetra and Brahma's fifth head getting glued to Rudra's hand.

To Dhritarashtra's pertinent query as to why Ashvatthama did not do all this earlier, Sanjaya provides the revealing answer that it was because he was afraid of Krishna and the Pandavas, so he wrought havoc in their absence.

Ashvatthama announces to Duryodhana that finally only 7 Pandavas and 3 Kauravas are left alive. The earth has been relieved of almost all its burden (the Yadavas are still left). The plan of the gods that had its seeds in Yama's *yajna* in the *Adi Parva* is finally fulfilled jointly by Vishnu and Shiva. Duryodhana dies, pleased to hear that Shikhandi and Dhrishtadyumna are dead, not concerned about the others. This confirms that the war was a basically a Panchala-Kaurava face-off. It is curious that the three heroes are so scared that they do not take any care of Duryodhana's corpse but quickly flee the spot. Sanjaya, deeply disturbed, rushes the next morning to the capital to report and, the war being over, he loses his special sight (9.62). Vaishampayana takes over as narrator once more.

Yudhishthira, after musing on the victory that is actually a defeat, suddenly switches track to Karna, extolling him as one who never fled the field–though we have seen that he did so many a time. Yudhishthira had thought that those who escaped death at Karna's hands were safe; but now they all dead. He describes Drona's battle in terms of a raging ocean, Bhishma as a raging fire, recalling Khandava, and notes that carelessness, over confidence, of the survivors led to their death. There is not a word about why the brothers did not warn the Panchalas of the danger of relaxing. Curiously, none of the brothers speak a word about their sons' deaths. It is as though these were "extras" tagged on to the epic for form's sake.

There is a rare glimpse of the human side of Yudhishthira when he voices his apprehension about Draupadi as she has grown frail with sorrows. When Draupadi swoons, Bhima swoops to support her, as always. Characteristically, Draupadi first pours sarcasm on Yudhishthira, then vows to fast to death unless the murderer is killed and the gem in his head is shown to her as proof. As ever, it is to Bhima that she turns, praising his unequalled valour, repeatedly equating him (in Arjuna's silent presence) with Indra, citing his protective and avenging role in Varanavata, Hidimba's forest and the Kichaka affair. As usual, Bhima rushes off impetuously to do her bidding.

Krishna now narrates a revealing incident to show Ashvatthama's nature. When Drona gave Arjuna the world-destroying missile Brahmashira, Ashvatthama also demanded it and he obliged reluctantly, knowing his son was impulsive and ill-spirited. Drona warned him never to use it against humans and feared he would not follow the noble path. Upset, Ashvatthama roamed about and visited Dvaraka. Here he offered the missile to Krishna in exchange for his discus, which he wanted to use to fight him. However, he was unable to lift it. Krishna told him that even Arjuna–than whom none was dearer and to whom he could give everything, even wives and sons–never dared ask for it, nor did his sons or Balarama. He describes Ashvatthama as a fool, anger-ridden, wicked, erratic, crafty, and cruel.

In Vyasa's ashram, seeing Bhima rushing towards him, Ashvatthama shoots the missile to slay the Pandavas, infusing it in a blade of grass. At Krishna's urging, Arjuna releases his missile to counter it. Narada and Vyasa stand between the two missiles since their collision would turn the land barren for 12 years. At

their bidding Arjuna retracts his–a task even gods cannot do–being "a strict-vowed brahmachari" (this does not connote celibacy here but self-restraint) who never used it even in the worst extremity. Ashvatthama is unwed, but a slave of his wrath and cannot recall the missile. Vyasa assures him that he will not be killed and persuades him to surrender his gem which, like the earrings of Paushya's queen in the *Adi Parva,* keeps one safe from weapons, disease, hunger, from gods, demons, snakes, thieves.

Section 16 begins with Krishna delighted that the missile's target is the wombs of Pandava women, and not the Pandavas themselves. We are reminded of his incongruous delight at Ghatotkacha's death. As Vishnu fosters creation after Rudra has destroyed it, Krishna prophesises that he will revive Uttara's still-born son to rule for sixty years. He curses Ashvatthama to roam for 3000 years, solitary, shunned, stinking of pus and blood, wracked by terrible diseases for his horrible crimes. Vyasa confirms the curse as Ashvatthama has been disrespectful of Narada and him and done a dreadful deed, particularly as though born a Brahmin he assumed Kshatriya dharma. Drona seems to have escaped being cursed by discarding weapons and accepting death. Legend has it that Ashvatthama still visits the Shiva temple in Asirgarh (near Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh) every morning and offers a single flower. Those who see him are struck blind or dumb. He is very much alive today. "Ashvatthama's mad again"; witness Rajmohan Gandhi's striking chapter in *Revenge and Reconciliation* entitled "Ashwatthama – the vengeful rishi– is still alive and active".

In section 17 Yudhishthira asks Krishna how the carnage could happen. Arjuna will put a similar question to Vyasa in the *Mausala Parva* later. Krishna extols the supreme power of Mahadeva, relating three myths to bring this home. Shiva, at Brahma's request to create creatures, engaged in ascesis immersed in the waters, produced the linga, but, enraged at Brahma having had someone else create in the meantime, cut it off. He destroyed the gods' sacrifice for not keeping offerings for him, a variant of which is the Daksha-*yajna* myth. Vyasa had mentioned this to Arjuna at the end of the *Drona Parva* when speaking of Shiva's greatness. With variations, this is repeated in the *Shanti* (section 274) and the *Anushasana Parvas* (section 145). Rudra creates a bow and pierces the sacrifice. It flees as a deer to the sky and shines as the Mrigashira asterism with Rudra in pursuit as Ardra

(Betelguese, the red giant), both in the Orion constellation. With the bow-end he slices Savita's arms, gouges out Bhaga's eyes, smashes Pusha's teeth. Worshipped by them, given his share, he restores everything, casting his rage into sea to become the Vadava (submarine fire). The Rigvedic deities are forced to accept the primacy of the people's god. Krishna's point is that when Shiva is enraged, everything is upset and "chaos is come again". Therefore, Ashvatthama must have gratified him. It is all Mahadeva's doing, not Ashvatthama's. We are reminded of Arjuna telling Vyasa in the *Drona Parva* that he saw Shiva advancing before him, destroying everything that he later targeted with his arrows. Similarly, in the *Gita* Krishna tells Arjuna that he has already slain the enemy.

Indeed, "All Time is unredeemable", and, we may add, all Karma. No wonder the percipient transcreator's dedication is addressed "to Maha-Kala, the presiding spirit of the Sauptika Parva and of every parva in the drama of life."

– Pradip Bhattacharya

Originally published in the *Sunday Statesman*,
8th Day Literary Supplement, 16.11.2008

[Pradip Bhattacharya retired as Additional Chief Secretary and specializes in comparative mythology.]

(See p. 644 for full details)

WRITERS WORKSHOP
Indian Creative Writing in English

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Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2008. I am four score. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3500 separate titles in its checklist (published over 50 years 1958-2008), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

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